A Study of

MYSTICISM in TIRUVACĀKAM

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Madurai Kamaraj University

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PREFACE

While I was engaged in making a regular study of the Tamil classics, I had the golden opportunity to get deeply absorbed in the religious works. Of them, the Tiruvācakam facinated me beyond measure. The exquisite choice of words and the subtle meaning that the words convey in the Tiruvācakam stirred my mind deeply besides giving me great delight. Therefore it is that I look upon the Tiruvācakam as a guiding light to my life, my 'Life's star', filling me with

> 'sensations sweet
> Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart
> And passing even into my purer mind
> With tranquil restoration
> ....
> How often has my spirit turned to Thee!'

The Tiruvācakam unfolds Manickavasakar's experience of the Divine. The experience is ineffable; however, while I began making a study of the work from an academic point of view, I came across Evelyn Underhill's book 'Mysticism' which deals with saints and their mystic experiences. I realised that 'the mystic experience' as explained by the English writer is reflected in the Tiruvācakam.

Mrs. Underhill gives a five-fold classification of the mystic experiences of Saints. The five stages of mystic experience are as follows:

1. Awakening of the Soul
2. Purgative Way
3. Illuminative way
4. Dark Night of the Soul; and
5. Unitive way.

A study of the explanation of the 'five stages' tempted me to launch upon an analysis of Manickavasagar's God-love and make a study of his mystic experience in the light of the 'Five

stages' as explained by Mrs. Underhill. Thus taking her exposition of mysticism as the basic guidelines, and following her methodology, I collected and codified the songs of the Tiruvācakam, trying to understand in an academic sense, the profound mystic experience of one of our greatest saints. It is as a result of this research work of mine that this book has taken shape.

Many a song in the Tiruvācakam reveals that Manickavasakar was subject to severe mental conflicts in the course of his religious life. Once he received the Grace of the Supreme Guru at Tiruperunturai and saw the Divine vision, the conflicts ceased and the Saint found refuge at His holy feet. However, the mystic vision he had did not last long. The saint felt that the vision faded away because of his own guilt or imperfection and he languished beyond measure, shedding tears. The poignant contrast between the pleasure he felt at the time of the vision and the pain at its loss, shook him to the roots and filled him with a world of woe. There seemed to be no end of his despair and desolation. His 'despair' can be seen in five stages, as follows:

(*a*) Simply mourning for the loss of the Vision of God.

(*b*) Condemning himself that he does not deserve the Vision of God and pining for it.

(*c*) Worrying and weeping in self-pity for having failed to grapple the Vision to his heart with hoops of steel and for being tempted by the bonds of worldliness.

(*d*) Mourning over the loss of the Vision owing to his own overwhelming worldliness and wondering at the same time of God's boundless grace in condoning his imperfections and accepting him as worthy of His Grace.

(*e*) Condemning himself for the apparent feeling that he is disunited from God and feeling desolate that his heart is as hard as stone.

While expressing his boundless woes and despair at this stage, the poet-saint realises the utter emptiness and falsity of all worldly pursuits and their essentially ephemeral nature. Knowledge and suffering bring in enlightenment. The worldly bonds gradually break away from him. Consequently, his love of God gains in intensity and begins shining like pure flame. This is a turning point in the saint's life. He is now a purely enlightened soul.

Many moving songs of Manickavasagar show how God Himself appeared before him out of His boundless Grace, manifesting Himself in various forms. The Vision of God as the Supreme Guru metamorphoses into manifestations of 'His Holy Feet', the Divine couple of Iswara and Parvati, the KING, the Beauteous Rider on the Horse etc., when the saint has this 'atmānubava' or inner experience of His manifestations, he is overcome by extreme delight—pure, unpolluted and limitless joy.

This pure delight in the experience of God leads to 'Gñāna' or pure wisdom. At this stage, the consciousness of various manifestations as separated from him, disappears and the saint becomes 'one with Siva'. The knower and the known become one—The Dancer and the Dance mingle. The poet sings of this wonderful union with God. He sings of adorning and adoring himself with the Konrai blooms which are symbolic of Siva Himself. He sings of the sensations—physical, mental, emotional and spiritual—that fell him with delight and peace 'that passeth understanding', at this stage. He feels he has undergone a sea-change united with Siva—an 'immortal Diamond' in the words of G. M. Hopkins. These experiences clearly illustrate what Mrs. Underhill terms 'Deification' and 'Spiritual marriage'. Manickavasagar looks upon God as his Guru or Teacher, his Father and his Mother and showers pure love upon Him. As his God-love grows more and more intense, he sings of Siva as the Lover and of himself as His Beloved. Siva is the 'Nāyaka' while he is the 'Nāyaki'. These songs come under the category of the traditional bridal mysticism.

The saint sings elaborately of the endless delights of 'the senses' which experience Siva as their Lord. The utterly

physical senses have turned into spiritual tools to enjoy Siva (Sivabhōga). Moreover, the saint suggests at this stage the importance of pilgrimage and the glory of Thillai to realise the 'soroopa lakshṇa' or manifestation of the Supreme. There is no other way to indicate the indescribable joy of union with God. It can be suggested only symbolically since the experience of 'Divine Delight' beggars all description. Therefore the poet uses many images in Tiruvācakam, all suggestive of the disappearance of duality and union with Siva.

The Tiruvācakam clearly expounds the mystic experience of God-love, illustrating all the stages from 'the Awakening of the Soul' to the supreme delight of Spiritual Union (The Unitive way). It is thus a unique exposition of mysticism in the whole range of Tamil literature, since it contains, as in a nut shell, all the glories of the divine songs in Tamil such as the Tevarams, Divya Prabandam, the songs of Thāyumanavar, of Kumara Guruparar, of Arunagirinathar, of Ramalinga Swamikal and a host of other devotees. To read the Tiruvācakam is to have read them all and the poem gives us endless joy since it draws our minds towards the Supreme. What can be nobler than this experience of union with God? This research work of mine is but a humble attempt to make an analysis of the major elements of mysticism in the Thiruvāca-kam.

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TRANSLITERATION

Rev. G. U. Pope has followed a certain system of transliteration in his translation of Tiruvācakam. While giving references and footnotes in this thesis, the verses are quoted in the form and spellings as found in Pope's translation. But diacritical marks are given to the transliterated words wherever possible.

THE CHART OF TRANSLITERATION

Voweḷṣ

அ	..	a	எ	..	e
ஆ	..	ā	ஏ	..	ē
இ	..	i	ஓ	..	ai
ஈ	..	ī	ஒ	..	o
உ	..	u	ஐ	..	ō
ஊ	..	ū	ஔ	..	au

ஃ — k

Consonants

க்	..	k	ம்	..	m
ங்	..	ṅ	ய்	..	y
ச்	..	c	ர்	..	r
ஞ்	..	ñ	ல்	..	l
ட்	..	ṭ	வ்	..	v
ண்	..	ṇ	ழ்	..	ḻ
த்	..	t	ள்	..	ḷ
ந்	..	n	ற்	..	ṟ
ப்	..	p	ன்	..	ṉ

Sanskrit Words

ஸ	..	s	ஷ	..	ṣ
ஜ	..	j	க்ஷ	..	kṣ

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RADHA THIAGARAJAN.

INTRODUCTION

‘ To see a world in a grain of sand
And a Heaven in a wild flower
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour ’.[1]

Thus sang William Blake, the English visionary in one of his mystical moods. Man's quest for the Absolute, his yearning to realise the True, the good and the beautiful finds immortal expression in the great arts such as poetry, music, dance, painting, etc. But only a few fortunate seekers of Truth have been blessed with the experience of mystic consciousness, with the direct apprehension of the Reality.

‘ Of all those forms of life and thought with which humanity has fed its cravings for Truth, mysticism alone postulates, and in the persons of its great initiates proves, not only the existence of the Absolute but also this link : this probability first of knowing, finally attaining it ’; says Evelyn Underhill in her book ‘ Mysticism ’,[2] while dealing with the mystic's unique experience of the Absolute. The Absolute is ineffable. It is not felt or known or seen by normal senses or normal consciousness and its real nature is not understood by mere learning or scrutiny or rational analysis. The philosopher tries at best to argue it out logically but in vain. It is only the mystic who apprehends the Reality in his personal life.

It cannot be easily explained away as mere instructive awareness or even intuitive perception. As far as the mystic is concerned, it is a very real experience—this apprehension of the Reality. William James refers to the important characteristics of mystical states of consciousness. They are Ineffability, Noetic quality, Transiency and Passivity.[3]

[1] ‘ The Poetical Works of Blake ’. ‘ Auguries of Innocence ’—Lines 1-4.
[2] Mysticism : P. 23.
[3] William James ‘ Varieties of Religious Experience ’. Pp. 371-372.

The mystic uses the rather 'disconcerting language of first-hand experience, not the neat dialectic of schools'.[1] There is the visionary transparency about the language used, which is quite distinct from the normal use of words. The metaphysicians present at best a vague or nebulous notion of the Absolute—impersonal and unattainable. But to the mystics, it is lovable, attainable and alive like an intimate being known and loved by us. 'God may well be loved but not thought. By love he may be gotten and holden ; but by thought never'.[2]

The present study aims at examining the elements of mysticism in Tiruvācakam. So far as Saivaite Literature is concerned, Tēvāram, Tiruvācakam, Tirumantiram are the three important religious works, where the elements of mysticism (or mystical expression) are found in varying degrees. Tirumantiram can be more aplty called a treatise on the mystic experience than a poetic effusion of mystic apprehension. Nammāḷvār's Tiruvāimoḷi may be taken to be akin to Tiruvācakam in its poetic expression of mystical experience. Aṇṭāl's lyrics, particularly the Tiruppāvai, is mystic poetry. In the compositions of the Cittars, mystic experiences are expressed in symbolic language. The Tiru-Arutpā of Rāmaliṅka Aṭikaḷ can be taken as belonging to a high order of mystic poetry. Thus the religious savants of Tamil Nadu have composed a series of mystic poems thereby evolving a tradition of mystical poetry in Tamil. This poetic tradition remains a treasure in Tamil Literature.

The Tiruvācakam composed by Māṇikkavācakar,[3] in the earlier periods of this poetic tradition is taken up for study in this thesis, largely from the mystic point of view. The purpose of this thesis is not to examine the Tiruvācakam from the religious or philosophical angle, but to examine it largely from the perspective of mysticism and analyse its various aspects. It is worth quoting from Rāmachandra Dīkṣitar in this context.

'The Tiruvācakam relates an autobiographical story of the different stages of Māṇikkavācakar's spiritual life and experience

[1] Mysticism. P. 24.

[2] 'The Cloud of the Unknowing' as quoted in 'Mysticism' by F. C. Happoid. P. 306.

[3] The age and period of Māṇikkavācakar is a controversial topic.

which ultimately enabled him to attain bliss ineffable and eternal. It is a torrential outflow of ardent religious feelings and emotions in rapturous songs and melodies. The work may be regarded as a convenient handbook on mystical theology.'[1]

G. Vaṉmīkanātaṉ, in the introduction to his ' Pathway to God through Tamil Literature ', adds to the above statement that, ' The Tiruvācakam is not merely a handbook of mystical theology, it is an Upaniṣad—as much an Upaniṣad as any of the ten Upaniṣads.'[2]

' If there is a distinction ', he continues, ' It is this—the Upaniṣads state a proposition, the Tiruvācakam furnishes the proof.'[3]

All these statements prove that the Tiruvācakam is essentially an expression of mystical experience.

Vaṅmīkanātaṅ has translated the Tiruvācakam and interpreted it as well, illustrating the mystic theory, from Thomas Merton's ' Seeds of Contemplation '. He concludes that Māṇikkavācakar is ' a mystic par excellence '. Moreover, he refers to the three phases of ' Spiritual Exercises ' as mentioned by St. Ignatius, viz., the Purgative Way, the Illuminative Way and the Unitive Way, and illustrates these three phases of spiritual progress from the poems of Tiruvācakam.

In the West, many authors have made detailed study of the mystic tradition. The names of George Meridith, Christiana Rossetti, Mrs. Browning, W. B. Yeats, Evelyn Underhill are worth mentioning. Underhill has made a detailed study of European mystics in her books, ' Mysticism ', ' The Mystic Way ', ' The Essentials of Mysticism ', ' Practical Mysticism ', etc. Moreover, she makes a study of the symbols used by the mystic poets.

This thesis, ' A Study of Mysticism in Tiruvācakam ' is prepared in the background of the theories of the various phases of mysticism

[1] Studies in Tamil Literature and History (as quoted in ' Pathway to God through Tamil Literature ', p. 21). Svāmi Vētācalam and Srinivasa Pillai are of opinion that Tiruvācakam does not appear to be an autobiographical poem in the strict sense of the term.

[2] ' Pathway to God through Tamil Literature '. P. 22.

[3] ' Pathway to God through Tamil Literature '. P. 26.

as described by Evelyn Underhill. The present student has taken the liberty of quoting extensively from Underhill's book, 'Mysticism' to show how her theories regarding the various aspects of mystic experience, are almost applicable to Māṇikkavācakar. Evelyn Underhill's theories have been used only so far as they help to classify the various phases of the mystic's experience. Thus the poems of Tiruvācakam are examined under the following five major heads :

1. The Awakening of the Self.
2. The Purgation or Purification of the Self.
3. The Illuminative Way.
4. The Dark Night of the Soul.
5. The Unitive Life.

Besides, there is a chapter entitled 'The Soul's Struggle', which discusses the inner conflict that the poet experienced before the 'Awakening of the Self'. An analysis of the symbols, used by Māṇikkavācakar to convey his mystic experience, is done under the heading 'Symbolism'. 'A glimpse of the poet's life' is also given.

It is true that the poems of Tiruvācakam have not been given to us in any particular order so as to enable us to trace the gradual development of the spiritual progress of the poet towards enlightenment and communion with God. When we study the poems applying the theories of the various phases of spiritual development, we become aware of a new 'order' evolving out of them and hence the necessity to re-arrange the poems to facilitate a study of mysticism.[1] Not many attempts have been made to classify the verses in this 'order' and explore their mystic significance in full, except that of Vaṉmīkanātaṉ.[2] So, a humble attempt is made in the present study, to deal with the entire process of Māṇikkavācakar's mystic experience with relevant illustrations and applying the classification of Underhill.

[1] Refer Appendix.

[2] Vaṉmīkanātaṉ in his book on 'Pathway to God through Tamil Literature' has taken the poems for his study in their traditional order only. Without disturbing the existing order, he has classified them under three heads already mentioned.

There are many old and new commentaries and English Translations of Tiruvācakam. The commentaries are :

1. Kāḻi Tāṇṭavarāyar's commentary.
2. Svāmi Vētācalam's commentary for the first four 'Akavals'.
3. Navanīta Kriṣṇa Bhāratiyār's commentary.
4. K. Subramania Piḷḷai's commentary.
5. Paṇṭitamaṇi Katirēcaṉ Ceṭṭiar's commentary for 'The Sacred Cento', 'Forsake me not' and 'The Maidens' Song of the Dawning'.
6. Ratṉa Navaratṉam's English commentary called 'Tiruvācakam, The Hindu Testament of Love'.
7. Vaṉmīkanātaṉ's 'Pathway to God through Tamil Literature'.
8. Commentary by S. Taṇṭapāni Tēcikar published by Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt.
9. Commentary by Svāmy Citpavānanta published by Rāmakriṣṇa Tapōvaṉam, Tiruparāiturai.

There is also an anonymous work called 'Akattia Cūtram' which is perhaps the earliest commentary giving the substance of each poem of Tiruvācakam in aphorisms. The aphorisms appear to bring out the significance of the experience conveyed in that poem.

To illustrate a few,

1. The substance of the poem 'Forsake me not' (Nīttal Viṇṇappam) is brought out as 'Prapañca Vairākkiyam'. This perhaps denotes the phase of 'purgation'.

2. The substance of the poem 'The Humming Bee' (Tirukkōttumpi) is given in the aphorism as 'Civaṉōṭu Aikkiyam' (union with Civa). This also suggests a mystic phase 'Unitive Life'.

3. The substance of the poem 'The Bruised Heart' Kuḻaitta Pattu) is given as 'Ātma Nivētaṉam' which perhaps signifies the phase of 'Self-naughting'.

Kāḻi Tāṇṭavarāyar's commentary on 'Akattia Cūtras' is indicative of the poet's mystic experience in many contexts. The phrases found in these aphorisms and those which are given under the name 'Tiruvācaka-Uṭkiṭai, (The essence of Tiruvācakam) largely agree with each other in their import.

There is yet another anonymous work called *Tiruvācaka Uṇmai* a collection of poems which aims at briefly interpreting Tiruvācakam from the Saiva Siddhānta point of view. A short statement of the purport of each poem has also been given in a book called, 'The Old Tirup-peruntuṟai Purāṇam'.

Navanīta Kriṣṇa Bhāratiār's commentary is based on the interpretation that all the poems of Tiruvācakam belong to Akattinai, in other words they illustrate 'Bridal Mysticism'.[1] In this aspect it differs from all other commentaries as it lays down a distinct mystic approach to Tiruvācakam.

The other commentaries, by Svāmi Vētācalam, Paṇṭitamaṇi Katirēcaṉ Ceṭṭiār and K. Subramania Piḷḷai, are all written from the point of view of Saiva Siddhānta. Kāḻi Tāṇṭavarāyar's commentary indicates both the mystical and Saiva Siddhānta aspects.

As far as the translations of the poem are concerned, the Tiruvācakam was first introduced to the Western World by Rev. G. U. Pope, through his translation, 'The Tiruvācakam or Sacred Utterances'. He has taken care to retain the spirit of the original, and has also prefaced some of the verses, besides adding some notes interpreting the poem in the light of Saiva Siddhānta.

The Tiruvācakam has also been translated into English by certain writers, such as Tiruvācaka Maṇi K. M. Balasubramaniam, Vaṉmīkanātaṉ and Ratṉa Navaratṉam. Sree Vanmīkanātan's mystic approach to the poems of Tiruvācakam and his classification have already been mentioned. Ratṉa Navaratṉam makes a literary approach to Tiruvācakam classifying it as The Poetry of

[1] The first reference to 'Bridal Mysticism' is found in Brahatāraṇya Upaniṣad. Chap. IV. 3. Yājñavalkya uses the mystic symbol of spiritual marriage to represent the final union with the Absolute.

(Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, p. 115).

Adoration, The Poetry of Experience, and The Testament of Beauty.

In the present thesis it is Pope's translation[1] that is used, whenever quotations are needed. Sometimes slight changes in the translations are made, where they appear more apt. The numbering of the poems and the Titles of the Poems are used as given by Pope. When a reference is given in the thesis, the name of the poem, the number of the stanza and the page number are given from Pope's translation as Footnotes.

When we examine the Tiruvācakam against the background of the poet-saint's life, certain issues stand out for closer scrutiny. In the body of the thesis, these issues have been analysed and examined and we have arrived at certain positive conclusions regarding them as well. The issues are as follows :

Issue No. 1

Many of the verses in Tiruvācakam express a great mental agony and conflict, showing a struggle seething within the poet's mind.

The question is asked whether even a great saint or Ñāṉi like Māṇikkavācakar would be subject to such a severe inner struggle at all or shall we say that he only appears to suffer what others—the less enlightened ones—experience ? (discussed in the chapter on ' The Soul's Struggle '.)

Issue No. 2 :

The occurrence at Peruntuṟai :—Is it a real event in the external world of objects ? What is the real significance or truth of the event ? (discussed in the chapter on ' The Awakening of the Self '.)

Issue No. 3 :

Māṇikkavācakar is generally acclaimed to be a religious teacher or Saint. Is it correct to call him a mystic ? Is he merely a mystic visionary ? Or, did his mystic apprehension bring about any

1 ' The Tiruvācakam or Sacred Utterances ' of the Tamil Poet, saint and sage Māṇikkavācakar. Oxford Clarendon Press. 1900.

definite change in his attitude to life and make him choose a new path ? (discussed in the chapter on ' The Awakening of the self ').

Issue No. 4 :

How are we to explain his mental struggle even after his apprehension of the Reality at Peruntuṟai ? How are we to interpret the songs of sorrow, despair and self-condemnation closely following the songs of God-love, ecstasy and divine frenzy (discussed in the chapter on ' The Purgation or Purification of the Self ').

Issue No. 5 :

Can we trace a mental re-orientation, a re-arrangement of concepts of Māṇikkavācakar in the Tiruvācakam poems ? (discussed in the chapter on ' The Illuminative Way ').

Issue No. 6 :

No other mystic has ever perceived the Absolute in the Personal form coupled with the Female Form. Can we explain how Māṇikkavācakar happened to have such a vision ? (discussed in the chapter on ' The Illuminative Way '.)

Issue No. 7 :

Most of the religions of the world speak of the ' Formless Absolute '. How are we to understand Māṇikkavācakar's statement that he perceived God in His Personal Form, when the poet-saint himself speaks of the Absolute as the one Nameless, Formless, etc. How then did he speak of the visual form of the Absolute ? (discussed in the chapter on ' The Illuminative Way '.)

Issue No. 8 :

What exactly does he mean by saying that he became ' Civam ' ? (discussed in the chapter on ' The Unitive Life '.)

Issue No. 9 :

How to reconcile the facts that Māṇikkavācakar considered God as his spiritual master, then father and later as lover ? (discussed in the chapter on ' Symbolism '.)

These issues are discussed and a humble attempt has been made to suggest relevant solutions from the mystic point of view.

The solutions found are placed before other students for further study in this field of mysticism. There is a summing up of all the findings in the concluding chapter.

The poem is in fact that first of its kind in Tamil as a complete exposition of mystic experience from the first to the last. Rāmaliṅka Aṭikaḷ,[1] a later mystic, acknowledges his debt to this inspiring poem. 'It is the Tiruvācakam that kindled the mystic experience in me' says he [2]. Such is the potentiality of the poem as a true expression of an intense mystical life, which had its consummation in the soul's attainment of the 'Real' or in its union with the Absolute both in its immanent and transcendent aspects.

This study is but a humble attempt to understand a fringe of what the mystics express of their ineffable experience. If this research would serve as a source of incentive for others to undertake an effort to dive deep into this ever-enchanting subject, it would have more than achieved its purpose. There is a need to make a deep study of every aspect of the mystical life of Māṇikkavācakar—the great poet-saint of our land.

[1] The name of this saint is also referred as Ramalinka Svāmikal, Rāmalinka Vaḷḷalār and Saint Rāmalinkar in the course of this thesis.

[2] Tiru-Aruṭpā : IV Bk. Āḷuṭaya Aṭikaḷ Arulmālai : 8.

1 A GLIMPSE OF THE POET'S LIFE

A brief examination of Māṇikkavācakar's life is made here. But, unfortunately, there is no authentic biography of the poet-saint and only the central event of his life is related here without going into further details.[1]

---

[1] The various works dealing with the poet's life are as follows :

1. The Tiruvālavāyuṭaiyār Tiruviḷaiyāṭal Purāṇam written by Perumpaṟṟappuliyūr Nampi, alludes to the following events :
   - (a) The imparting of Supreme wisdom to the poet.
   - (b) The metamorphosis of jackals into horses.
   - (c) The metamorphosis of horses into jackals.
   - (d) The Divine Sport of bearing the soil.
2. The Kaṭampavaṉa Purāṇam.
3. The Tiruvātavūrar Purāṇam written by Kaṭavuḷ Māmuṉivar.
4. The Tiruviḷaiyāṭal Purānam written by Parañjōti Muṉivar.
5. Tirupperunturai Purāṇam written by Tirucirapuram Miṉākṣi-cuntaram Piḷḷai alludes to the following events :
   - (a) Tiruvātavūrar Tiru avatārap paṭalam.
   - (b) Amaiccurimai Kaṇṭa paṭalam.
   - (c) Tirup-perunturai aṭainta paṭalam.
   - (d) Upatēcap-paṭalam.
   - (e) Viṭaipeṟu paṭalam.
   - (f) Tillaiyai aṭainta paṭalam.
6. The Uttarakōcamaṅkaip purāṇam contains a chapter dealing the holy penance of Pārvati.
7. The Halāsya Mānmiya—in Sanskrit.
8. The Ātikailāsa Mānmiya—in Sanskrit.
9. The Maṇivācaka Purāṇa in Sanskrit.

No two accounts of the same event agree in all details, as found in the books cited here.

It is well known through tradition that he served as the Chief Minister of Pandiya King. Even while serving in the Court,his mind was ever exploring the ways and means of achieving the blessing of Lord Civa. Though engaged in the busy, diplomatic activities, he realized the transcience of earthly possessions. He had an inner longing for spiritual uplift. He longed to find out the spiritual preceptor, the Guru, who might show him the way of salvation.

While the Minister was thus evolving into a Ñāṉi, he was bidden by the King to purchase horses for his cavalry. Taking with him plenty of gold from the royal coffers, Māṇikkavācakar left Madurai and reached Tirup-peruntuṟai.

At Tirup-peruntuṟai, the poet saw a holy sage, the Guru seated in the shades of the Kurunta tree, surrounded by his disciples. The Minister bowed before the Guru and was at once transported with rapture. The Guru taught him the divine mantra of Sūkṣma Pañchākṣara and gently placed his feet on the disciple's head.

This is the central event in the poet's life. The mystic significance of this important event has been examined in the course of this thesis.

The various other details of his life can be found in the traditional accounts of his biography. It is his meeting with the Guru at Tirup-peruntuṟai, that impelled him on a quest for the apprehension of the Absolute. The Guru is the spiritual mentor who enabled him to attain a higher mystic consciousness and follow the path of spiritual salvation.

It is already mentioned that the poet, even while serving as Minister, had an intense longing for the Lord, and was fully conscious of the ephemeral nature of material wealth. This may be inferred from his words in Tiruvācakam :

'I lived by sea of learning multiform ;
I lived in sorrow men call wealth ;
I lived 'mid ancient stings of poverty,
And thus in varied forms and fortunes spent my days.
Then wondrous thought of the Divine, so-called, arose.'[1]

[1] Praise : Lines 38-42. P. 32.

The poet, blessed as he was, with great intuition and knowledge began learning the various Sāstras and other religious works to quench his spiritual thirst. He conversed with religious teachers and philosophers of the various schools. But these efforts did not clear his doubts and satisfy the inner longing for God. On the other hand, these religious teachers, learned in the Vēdas and Sāstras and the philosophers propagating conflicting theories bewildered him, since every sect was fighting to establish what it considered to be true. The religious world was filled with the buzz of speculative arguments and dialectics in his time. To add to the confusion, the speculative doctrine of māyāvāta was propagated virulently. Naturally, the poet was disgusted with such a state of affairs, for he was bent on the right guidelines for spiritual enlightenment.

There are some statements in Tiruvācakam which reveal the poet's revolt against the disputing scholars of the days. There were also atheists and materialists who refused to believe in anything that cannot be perceived by the senses. They too were active in spreading their views. All the controversies led to great confusion in the poet's mind. The scholars, religious savants and materialists of the day spent their time in disputations and quarrels. It was indeed a stupendous task for the poet to keep himself aloof from the vitiating atmosphere and follow the spiritual path. He expresses his struggle in relation to the times as follows :

' And thus in varied forms and fortunes spent my days.
Then wondrous thought of the Divine, so-called, arose.
Soon as I knew that BEING, free from hate, unique,
Delusive powers in ever-changing millions
Began beguiling varied play.
Relations, neighbours, came around,
With fluent tongue they urged their ' atheism.'
Friends around—(such herds of cattle old !)—
Seiz'd me, call'd, hurried to and fro ;
The Brahman said, ' the way of penance is supreme ';
And others showed the law of trusting love !
Sectarian disputants complacently
Discordant tenets shouted loud and fought.
Then haughty Vedanta creed unreal came,—
Whirled, dashed, and roared like furious hurricane.

Lōkāyathan̲ a glistening mighty snake
Brought cruel poisoned heresies.
Whilst these delusions, endless, girt me round,'[1]
' I lay bewilder'd in the barren troublous sea
Of sects and systems wide discordant all ;—
My care He banished, gave in grace His jewelled Feet ;
Praise we His gracious acts, AND BEAT TEḶḶĒṆAM !'[2]

It is this vile atmosphere that threatens to envelop the mind of the poet. The temptations of the world on the one hand, the conflicting atmosphere of the religious world and the negative attitude of the atheists on the other, seem to overwhelm the poet's mind seeking for the enlightenment. Hence the poet's struggle to combat the temptations. The inner struggle, the conflicts, the wavering of the mind while it gropes to find the true path, are all examined in detail in the next chapter entitled—"The Soul's Struggle."

[1] Praise : Lines 41-58. P. 32-34.
[2] The Tambour Song : 17. P. 157-158.

2. THE SOUL'S STRUGGLE

Many a verse in Tiruvācakam speaks of the poet's blessed mood when he had the beatific vision of God. But this supreme bliss of life—this mystic experience—is not obtained without a long mental struggle fraught with disappointment, desolation, despair and intense anguish. At each period of his spiritual experience, the causes of his anguish were of different kinds. Some of them speak of his strenuous efforts to follow the spiritual path in order to enjoy perennial bliss. They reveal his struggle to live a life of unswerving love for God. Some others speak of the pangs of separation from God, once the beatific vision of the Lord at Peruntuṟai had disappeared. Some poems are his lamentations over his worldly attachments and a few others reveal his anguish at a particular stage of experience called by mystics, 'The Dark Night of the soul.'

The poems revealing these diverse kinds of sorrow and the stages of mystic life they represent, are as follows :

1. The Sacred Cento. 2. Forsake me not.	—	Purgative way.
3. The Ancient Temple Song. (Verse No. 4, 8 & 10)	—	Dark Night of the soul.
4. Weariness of Life. (Verse No. 6, 7.) 5. The Refuge Decad. 6. The Desire Decad.	—	Purgative way.
7. No joy in life. (Verse No. 1, 3.)	—	Dark Night of the soul.
8. The Supplication.	—	do.
9. The Bruised Heart.	—	do.
10. The Garland of Rapture.	—	do.

For the sake of reference, some verses from the above mentioned poems are given below :

' Unmeet was I to enter 'mongst Thy loving ones,
my flawless Gem !' [1]

' O Primal One, Thy Foot's fair flower if I should
quit, and yet live on,
My soul is iron, stone my mind ; my ear to what
shall it compare !' [2]

' My Chief, who gave me grace sweeter than
mother's love, I see not now !
Yet in the fire I fall not, wander not o'er hills,
nor plunge me in the sea !' [3]

' The way Thy will ordains befits me well !
Faithless I strayed, I left
Thy saints. A reprobate was I ! How did I
watch the one belov'd,
The quiverings of the lip, the folds of circling
robe, the timid bashful looks,—
To read love's symptoms there ! My mind thus
ruin to myself wrought out.' [4]

' Transcendent One, extending through both earth and heaven,
THOU SEE'ST TO NONE BUT THEE I CLING !—
O Civa-puram's King ! In glorious beauty bright,
Civaṉ, in holy Perun-turrai's shrine
Who dwell'st ! To whom make I my plaint, whom blame, if
Thou
Who mad'st me Thine deny Thy grace ?
THOU SEE'ST NO JOY have I upon this sea-girt earth ;
BE GRACIOUS, BID ME COME TO THEE !' [5]

It may be mentioned that there are no poems in Tiruvācakam which depict exclusively a decisive phase in his spiritual experience,

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[1] The Sacred Cento : 10 P. 47.
[2] *Ibid* : 37 P. 60.
[3] *Ibid* : 39 P. 61.
[4] *Ibid* : 57 P. 67.
[5] No joy in life : 1 P. 248.

called soul's struggle. During his efforts of purgation, the poet sings, as in a flash-back, of all the mental agony and spiritual struggle before he experienced the vision at Peruntuṟai. So these poems serve as our basis of reference in the present chapter under study.

The *vision* the poet had at Peruntuṟai is fleeting in its nature. When the vision fades, the poet naturally mourns over the loss of the ' celestial light ' in many songs. He thinks that God out of His own will and boundless mercy manifested Himself before him, and that He disappeared because of his unworthiness to enjoy His beatific vision for ever. It is now that he thinks of his own weaknesses before he apprehended the divine vision, his mental struggle, the obstacles he had to face in following the spiritual path and conflicts he had experienced. He expresses all of them with great agony. His deep sense of sorrow at his painful awareness of his own weaknesses take shape as immortal words of poetry.

Let us now examine evidences from Tiruvācakam that reveal the mental conflict and the poet's self-criticism :

> ' Me, meanest one, in mercy mingling Thou didst
> make Thine own,— '[1]

Here the poet thinks that God chose to reveal Himself to him who is unworthy of such Grace. Here the term ' meanest ' shocks us into thought. There are other similar terms of reproach used by the poet in self-condemnation. Here are some more instances :

> ' To me who lay mere slave,—meaner than any dog,—
> Essential grace more precious than a mother's love !'[2]

> ' Unmeet was I to enter ' mongst Thy loving ones,
> my flawless Gem !
> Ambrosia rare ! The way Thou took'st me for Thine
> own and mad'st me meet !'[3]

> ' . . . . . I, lowest of men that live ;'[4]

[1] Forsake me not : 1 P. 86.
[2] Civaṉ's Ways of Old : Lines 60-61 P. 5.
[3] The Sacred Cento : 10 P. 47.
[4] *Ibid* ; 23 P. 53.

'..Thou .. mad'st me Thine,—an evil wholly worthless dog,
And thoroughly base ;—. . . .'[1]

'Hail ! Loving One, Who deign'st to make
false ones like me Thine own !'[2]

'Me iron-hearted and deceitful one, Thine own
Thou mad'st ;'[3]

Now, the question arises, why does the poet-saint use such harsh terms of self-condemnation.

The contrast between the mystic experience and the world experience is so very great that immediately after the former the saint feels the poignancy, the meanness, the falsehood and guilefulness of everything pertaining to the world, so very much concentrated in and around him. Hence this self-condemnation. The slipping away from the mystic experience after all the sufferings and struggles seem to the saint to have been brought about by his own wilful act, due mainly to his attachments to the things of the world as of yore and this makes his condemnation and following remorse more servere.

It may be asked whether Māṇikkavācakar, the great saint that he was, was subject to this mental conflict at all? Did he not apprehend the Absolute? Did he not attain union with God? How then did he have to struggle with his mind ? We are reminded of Thomas A. Kempis in this context. Thomas Kempis in his 'Imitation of Christ' says :

'All blessed saints, that now be crowned in heaven, grew and profited by temptations and tribulations, and those that could not well bear temptations, but were finally overcome, be taken perpetual prisoners in hell. There is no order so holy, no place so secret, that is fully without temptation, and there is no man that is fully free from it here in this life ; for in our corrupt body we bear the matter whereby we tempted, that is, our inordinate concupiscence, wherein we were born.'[4]

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[1] *Ibid* : 51 P. 65-66.
[2] *Ibid* : 63 P. 70.
[3] *Ibid* : 80 P. 75.
[4] Thomas A. Kempis 'Imitation of Christ'

Jung** will speak of not only the personal memory but also the race memory which form the unconscious mind which is really the greater part of our mind. The mind like a crystal takes the colour of the ideal or attachments as the Saiva Siddhanta says.[1] Therefore, the attachments to God should be strengthened and the former attachments slowly lose their grip, wither away and die as Tiruvaḷḷuvar states.[2] But the positive sublimation appears at first as a struggle, a war with Nature, a kind of conscious effort, till the force of the Grace descending on us is realised in full.

A man becomes a Ñāṉi, when he thus overpowers all the mental distraction and surrenders himself entirely to the will of God. The mind being part of the physical body partakes of its baseness. The mind is fickle, bounded by desires and led by instincts. An ordinary want develops into a desire, then greed and unquenchable fire, with a zeal to obtain the object of desire. There can be nothing more inimical to spiritual aspirants than the monstrous aspect of the mind. Therefore, it is, that they dread any thought of worldly things. When a wish takes the form of a desire for an object or any other being in the mind, the spiritual aspirants are naturally alarmed and they want to nip it in the bud. This budding is the desire. Their primary goal in life is to devote themselves totally to God. Therefore, even the slightest mental stir causes them the greatest worry or even agony. They struggle hard with their own minds to root out 'the troubles of desire' and turn it towards spirituality. Being idealists they cannot tolerate even the slightest swerving on the part of the mind from the chosen path of spirituality.

Māṇikkavācakar too has a similar self-examination and criticises himself severely. Especially the poems sung after his apprehension of the vision, clearly reveal how his aspirations and idealism clash with the disturbing mental aptitudes.

Moreover, Tiruvācakam bears ample testimony of his wide and

** (a) 'Psychology of The Unconscious' by Dr. C. G. Jung—Pp. 199-201.
(b) 'Contemporary Schools of Psychology' by Robert S. Woodworth. (Quotes 'Jung's' theory in p. 201 last para).

[1] Civañāṉabhōtam : 8th Cūtram 3rd division : 1st veṇpā.

[2] Tirukkuṟal ; 36th Chapter : 9.

deep learning besides his intuitive knowledge. Even in the first song of Tiruvācakam the poet sings :

' Grass was I, shrub was I, worm, tree,
Full many a kind of beast, bird, snake,
Stone, man, and demon. ' Midst Thy hosts I served.
The form of mighty Asuras, ascetics, gods I bore.
Within these immobile and mobile forms of life,
In every species born, weary I've grown,' [1]

Here in this formidable array of past births, he speaks of the entire cycle of birth, growth and death—a part of the upward evolutionary process. Here is an intuitive awareness of past. Now he feels soul-weary at this re-incarnation and rebirth. There is the spiritual awareness in the poet that salvation lies in escaping this cycle of birth, growth and death. So he sings of getting rid of them in the above song. Therefore, it is obvious that he hates not the evolutionary process or the will of God but the painful and misleading involvements implied in such births and this hatred grows more intense because of the mental distractions engendered.

The embodied birth, then conceals the nature of Ñāṉa or true wisdom or self-realisation. He understands that this life itself is an obstacle to the spiritual development.

' I lay, hidden amid illusion's shrouding gloom.
Thou binding with rare cords of virtue and of sin,
Didst clothe with outer skin, enveloping with worms and filth,—
Within my mine-gated dwelling foul bewildered,
By the five senses sore deceived,—'[2]

The nature of the body sometimes corrupts the mind and sometimes even the soul. When the self thinks of contemplating on God, this body drags it down to lower passions and makes it wallow in them. He says

' ....If Thou
hast caused me Thine abiding glory to forget ;
.... forlorn ;'[3]

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[1] Civaṉ's Ways of Old : Lines 26-31. P. 3.
[2] *Ibid* : Lines 51-55. P. 5.
[3] The Bruised Heart : 4. P. 274.

The poet is steeped in sorrow when the mind is swayed by the physical aspect of birth. He struggles to fix the mind in concentration of the divine principle. But it strays from object to object, for that is the nature of the mind. Whenever he is subject to this kind of reflection, he is in agony. He chastises the mind, rebukes it,

' By the five senses sore deceived,—
To me, mean as I was, with no good thing,
Thou didst grant grace,
That I, with mind erewhile embruted,—pure one !—should
Become commingling love, in soul-subduing rapture melt !'[1]

It is this divided loyalty of the mind that causes the conflict. His learning, wisdom and spiritual concentration enabled him to know the reality, and set before him the lofty ideal of spiritual life. He chooses to give up this embodied life to follow the spiritual path, to attain his goal. But the mind sometimes co-operates, sometimes does not. Hence the struggle. The mind that usually functions in harmony with his pure intelligence sometimes strays :

' While SENSES made me quake, I trembling swerved to
falsehood's way."[2]

says the poet.

Here we have to be clear that only his mind faltered a little. The poet-saint led an absolutely pure, unsullied life from the social and conventional point of view. As already stated, mind is not merely the conscious mind but also the unconscious mind whose stirrings will be realised by the saint in dreams, imagination, reflex actions etc. The poet with a power of graphic and, often because of hatred, an exaggerated description makes them almost a physical occurrence. He actually abhors these. He is not satisfied with the external impression juxtaposed by the ideal of spiritual life ; even the slightest mental slur appears too exaggerated. His dread of the mind, his anger at the apparently ineradicable weakness, *his sense of revolt*, all these are expressed in agony, when the conflict occurs.

' I, LONELY, tost by billows broad of anguish sore,
on the great ' sea of birth ', with none to aid ;[3]

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[1] Civaṉ's Ways of Old : Lines 55-58. P. 5.
[2] Forsake me not : 28 P. 94.
[3] The Sacred Cento ; 27 P. 55.

What a picture of desolation ! This birth of his is a vast sea —apparently limitless—women in it are the tempestuous winds. The desire for them is the shark. How much does he suffer mentally !

' Disturbed by winds of mouths roseate like ripened fruit,
lay caught in jaws of the sea-monster lust !" [1]

The poet's struggle to cross this ocean of ' birth ' and ' reach the shore ' is a spiritual struggle to realize the Absolute. But he fears there is none to help him in this struggle. God, God is the only Refuge and the poet is happy that there can be no better support than God Himself during this struggle. So, the poet says that he ' seized the raft of Thy Five Letters.'[2]

What then is the inner struggle or the Soul's struggle ?

Though born in this world in this ' ocean ' of earthly life, he struggles hard to stick to God as his only refuge without allowing himself to be swallowed by the ' sharky lust.' This is the crux of the conflict. The man about to be drowned cries aloud and prays for rescue and there comes God or Ñāṉa—the raft. The efforts taken to rescue himself from this danger of earthly life form the inner struggle. This does not mean that the poet himself has become a victim of the weakness. He is not at all overpowered by them—nor does he allow himself to be overpowered by passions. He is only extremely zealous in guarding his mind from being overpowered by them. He knows the susceptibilities of the mind. Hence his strenuous efforts to check and control the mind. Thus the poet's (soul's) struggle can be summed up as the efforts directed towards complete concentration and as the painful consciousness of the mind that fails the goal sometimes, though the self is ' aware.'

The functions of the mind are usually directed by the senses, wealth, relations, family, learning ; all these cause thought, desire, and sorrows in the mind and so far as worldly life is concerned, the worldly possessions mentioned above are found even necessary. Māṇikkavācakar was a minister and as such had a splendid position. He must have realised that these were obstacles on his spiritual

[1] The Sacred Cento : 27 P. 55.
[2] *Ibid* ; P. 56.

path. The former clashes with his self-chosen goal. Hence the inner struggle. Since people regard only the material wealth he considers them mad. They neglect spiritual values. He is in the world, but still his self is out of it. He cannot reconcile himself easily with the conventional attitudes of the people.

> ' In this mad world, 'mid stress and strife confused,
> from birth and death that ceaseless spring ;—
> Where hoarded treasure, women, offspring, tribe,
> and learning's store, men prize and seek ;—
> He calms the storm of mental changing states.'[1]

He says that his mind too is apt to become worldly, surrounded as he is, by such mad men. He is aware of the dangers to which his mind is exposed.

> ' In pleasures false I plunged, and sank deep down,—
> each day of earthly prosperous joy,
> I thought it true, and thus enslaved I lay ;[2]

> ' I wealth and kindred and all other bliss
> enjoy'd ; by tender maidens' charms was stirr'd ;'[3]

This is only an exposition of the external dangers to which the mind is susceptible. But it is the outlook or the value one attaches to these attachments that decides (or matters). Even if one loses all these, except the grace of God one is not lost. But if they are valued for their face values one gets hopelessly entangled in them, going ever away from God. Māṇikkavācakar is not really entangled. The contrast between the mystic experience and the world experience, immediately after the first onrush of the former, exposes the hollowness and illusion of the world experience. At the beginning stage the very sight of the world is so very repugnant which by a graphic description he portrays forth as though they were his own. There is nothing wrong committed as such—but he suffers mentally so much, as though he has fallen a victim to the temptations of life. This is born of extreme sensitiveness, a certain imaginative sympathy as keen as Keats had.[4] For the true idealists,

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[1] The Humming Bee : 6 P. 145.
[2] *Ibid* : 17 P. 150.
[3] The Miracle Decad : 5 P. 311.
[4] Sidney Colvin ' On Keats ' (E.M.L. Series).

there is no or can be no gulf between thought, word and deed. The slightest stir looms large as the greatest deed. We may think of Jesus Christ in this context who is said to have suffered for the sins of all mankind and shed his blood. Or, we may say Māṇikkavācakar's consciousness is so extremely refined, as to suffer for all ' uncommitted sins ', which but fleet a moment in consciousness. *To utter a sin itself is to visualise it mentally.* Such is the gross nature of the body or the tragic aspect of this embodied birth in this world. We cannot avoid it. Therefore, the poet-saint chastises his mind so severely for even the slightest swervings. We can think of Bertrand Russell's words in this connection. He says that the truly cultured man is one who feels for the sufferings of the unknown beings, far removed from him. Hence the poet wails :

Like little shrubs where elephants contend,
by senses five
I've been sore vexed ; lo, THOU, my Father,
HAST FORSAKEN me !
To sinful me commingled honey, milk, sweet cane,
ambrosia,
LIGHT of my soul,—thrilling my flesh and inmost
frame,—Thou art !'[1]

' TRANSCENDENT LORD, with Thine own ancient saints,
me faulty one
Thou didst desire ! O Aran, yet Lo ! THOU'ST
FORSAKEN ME ! —
Thou didst me place near Thee,—like the hare-spots
thou wear'st,—
O mighty Warrior 'gainst birth's five-mouth'd snake,
my soul would shun !'[2]

' Like worm in midst of ANTS, by senses gnawed and
troubled sore,
Me, utterly alone, Lo ! THOU'ST FORSAKEN ; Thou
Whom fiery death obeyed ;
Whose fragrant flowery Foot the heavenly ones
attain, and they
Who know ; O MIGHTY One, Who from Thy servants
partest not !'[3]

[1] Forsake me not : 21 P. 92.
[2] *Ibid* : 35 P. 97.
[3] *Ibid* : 25 P. 93.

The poet-saint may thus be said to have protean imagination like Keats, to become one with all the objects of suffering in the external world. Or he may be said to have an extraordinarily sensitive consciousness, which made him exaggerate the slightest trace of mental feelings. From a general or a social point of view, his was the most cultured and refined mind that suffered for the sins committed by humanity at large. Besides, how many poet-saints have this intellectual honesty or integrity of soul which makes them lay bare the innermost recesses of their minds in their poems. How pathetic are his words when he speaks of the senses and their powers over the mind? He realises that when God chose to appear before him, it was an act of boundless Grace on His part, for he does not deserve this Bliss. So the inner struggle is the conflict between the lingering worldliness in his mind and his spiritual fervour. He expresses it as follows :

> ' My spirit stirred, entered within, and made me His :
> THIS MATCHLESS MIRACLE I KNOW NOT, I !'[1]

> ' In pleasures false I plunged, and sank deep down,—
> each day of earthly prosperous joy,
> I thought it true, and thus enslaved I lay ;'[2]

[1] The Miracle Decad : 5 P. 311.
[2] The Humming Bee : 17 P. 150.

3. THE AWAKENING OF THE SELF

(The awakening of Transcendental Consciousness)

'This experience of the awakening of the self is usually abrupt and well-marked and is accompanied by intense feelings of joy and exaltation', says Evelyn Underhill in her book 'Mysticism.'[1] She adds that a decisive event has to bring this about, and we learn from the accounts of mystics in their pre-converted state, that this apparently abrupt conversion is really, as a rule, the sequel and result of a long period of restlessness, uncertainty and mental stress. 'It is a disturbance of the equilibrium of the self, which results in the shifting of the field of consciousness from lower to higher levels, with a consequent removal of the centre of interest from the subject to an object now brought into view, the necessary beginning of any process of transcendence.'[2]

It has been mentioned in the previous chapter that Māṇikka-vācakar's mystic vision at Tirup-perunturai brought about a change of heart in the poet and turned his mind entirely towards God. Here in this chapter, we shall try to elucidate and establish this statement with evidence from Tiruvācakam.

So far as the references about this vision go, the Supreme Reality of Civa appeared to Māṇikkavācakar externally as a Divine preceptor and internally as a Divine Light. It is, therefore, meet to examine the external manifestation biographically and the internal experience from the mystical angle.

The poet is convinced of the reality of the external vision, judging from the simultaneous impact of the inner vision on his

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[1] Mysticism : P. 178.
[2] *Ibid* : P. 176.

mind. The inner vision was the wonderful experience of a radiant Light within. The poet proclaims the irresistible nature of that Supernal bliss, in Tiruvācakam. In almost every poem he alludes to it, pouring forth his gratitude for the Lord's compassionate Grace, repeating the words—'I am Thine, save me.' In fact, he deals elaborately with the inner vision ; he makes it clear that the vision is the Supreme principle of Civa.

It may be noted that there are various works which deal with the poet's experience of the external manifestation of the Divine, but they are legendary. Here we confine ourselves to the account of this inner vision given in Tiruvācakam and study how the external vision led to the Inner or the Mystic One.

The external vision :

The poet frequently refers to the shades of the Kurunta tree at Tirup-peruntuṟai where he first saw the Divine Preceptor. Of the many lyrics referring to this incident, 'The Decad of Grace' is remarkable. All the ten songs of this decad speak of this experience repeatedly. One of them runs :

'Thou, Who in Peruntuṟai's sylvan groves
'neath the Kuruntham's flow'ry shade didst rest.'[1]

Assuming a tangible form and colour, though unseen by others, He manifested Himself as a Guru before Māṇikkavācakar.

'Thou cam'st in grace on this same earth,
didst show Thy mighty feet'[2]
'As Guru didst show Thyself, and make me Thine.'[3]
'Thee, Endless One, benignly manifest,—
diffusing light,—as Man, I saw Thee come !'[4]

The Transcendent Being whose personal form and complexion are unknown to mortal ones as well as immortal angels is said to have been seen in corporeal frame.

'....the heavenly host in 'wildered thought
know not the way, Father, to reach Thy feet.

[1] Grace : 5 P. 257.
[2] Civaṉ's Ways of Old : Line 59 P. 5.
[3] The Morning Hymn : 8 P. 211.
[4] The Sacred Cento : 91 P. 80.

Thou showd'st Thy form, ...'[1]

The poet-saint says that he saw God with his physical eyes :

' . . . . even I have seen Him with my eyes !'[2]

All these go to show that the Almighty, unknown and unknowable, appeared to the poet-saint as a ' personal God ' under the ' Kurunta ' tree.

Māṇikkavācakar gives a graphic account of what the Lord did to him appearing in human form. All His actions were imbued with the tender care and loving-kindness of a mother. His very look, words and actions infused in the poet a unique feeling, that he had never felt before in his life. Some indefinable, inherent power of the Lord's look is said to have penetrated through the poet's eyes and reached the very core of his mind putting an end to all traces of delusion lingering there.

' Regarding me distraught, Thou bad'st confusion cease,'[3] The preceptor's very look brought about a miraculous change by removing the delusions of the mind, which had assailed the poet earlier. To see Him and to be seen by Him are both unique.

Next was the Lord's word—the word that taught the poet to utter the ' Sūkṣma pañchākṣara of CIVĀYANAMA' :It passed into the poet's ' purer mind ' ; his intellect, his heart and his very self became soaked, as it were, in the word.

' O King ! Me, mastered with a single word,
Thou held'st erewhile.'[4]

The word possessed him fully, entering the very core of his being. To hear Him and to be heard by Him were both unique. The poet uttered the word again and again involuntarily. As he did so, he felt as though relieved of a great burden. ' The heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world '[5] gradually melted away. He experienced a new bliss.

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[1] *Ibid* : 25 P. 54.
[2] The Universe : 59 P. 21.
[3] Grace : 9 P. 259.
[4] Weariness of Life : 2 P. 226.
[5] Wordsworth : ' Tintern Abbey ' Lines 40-42.

Next comes the Lord's action. The Lord bade the poet-saint come nearer Him and placed His Lotus-feet on his head. Then it was that the Initiation was complete. Beginning with the look, growing with the word, and reaching perfection in action, the Initiation by the Lord led to the awakening of the self within. In other words, the poet became conscious of the true nature of his self. So long, his self was dependent on his mind, intellect and senses, for perception ; now it became independently active—self-aware—acting voluntarily to experience the mystic vision. All consciousness of the external world, the feelings it aroused, the knowledge gained in practical experience, its maturity, the awareness of the physical existence of the body, all disappeared. The very functioning of the mind ceased. This fading of all consciousness of the external world and internal distinctions of the physical aspect is succintly expressed as :

' His sacred Feet,—the twain,—soon as upon my
head He placed,

Help of encircling friends,—the whole,—I
utterly renounced ;

In Tillai's court begirt with guarded streams,
in mystic dance

He moves. That Raftsman's glory SING, AND PLUCK[1]
THE LILY-FLOWER !

As long as the mind functions, it is not rid of desire, attachments, sorrows, etc. But when the mind itself ' dissolves ', as it were into nothing, they disappear. When the consciousness of all the elements (Tatvās) cease, the pure self reveals itself as it is. Māṇikkavācakar sees himself as the purest self. It was in this state that the poet-saint experienced the mystic vision—the vision of Effulgent Light within.

The Mystic Vision :

The unique experience of the vision of the spiritual master at Peruntuṟai led to the ecstatic experience of being blessed with

[1] The Lilies : 1 P. 168.

an inner vision. It was the strangest of all human experience, never known or felt by the poet before. Hence the words :

‘ Him none by hearing know ; He knoweth no decay ;
He hath no kin ; naught asking, heareth all !
While people of the land beheld, here on this earth
to me, a cur, He gave a royal seat ;
To me, a dog, all things not shown before, He showed ;
all things not heard before, He caused to hear ;’[1]

These words reflect his sense of wonder and thrill at the new experience. Besides the awareness of the vision within, he speaks of listening to sounds, unheard before.

‘ all things not heard before, He caused to hear ;’[2]

What exactly is the nature of this mystic inner vision and the mystic sounds ? To answer this question, we have to examine closely some more songs in Tiruvācakam.

The strange, spiritual metamorphosis occurred, the moment the Lord placed His Holy Feet on the devotee's head. The Holy Feet of the Lord Himself are said to be limitless in divine glory.

‘ I saw Thy Foot-gem limitless,’[3]

None has had the good fortune of seeing His Holy Feet, says he. In order to endow him with true wisdom, God Himself is said to have shown His Holy Feet to him appearing as a Preceptor :

‘ Thou Mighty said'st to me, ‘ Behold,’ and showed'st
Thy jewell'd feet.’[4]
‘ Thou cam'st in grace on this same earth, didst
show Thy mighty feet ’[5]
‘ Thou in Whose brow a central eye doth gleam ! Thy feet—
the twain—I saw ;’[6]

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[1] The Sacred Cento : 28 P. 56.
[2] *Ibid* : 28 P. 56.
[3] *Ibid* : 48 P. 64.
[4] Devout Musings : 2 P. 325.
[5] Civaṉ's Ways of Old : Line 59 P. 5.
[6] The Bruised Heart : 9 P. 276.

' Thee, Endless One, benignly manifest,—
diffusing light,—as Man, I saw Thee come !'[1]

All these go to prove the poet-saint's conviction that the Holy Feet themselves are the mystic symbol of Divine Grace. He realised that Lord Civa Himself appeared embodied as a spiritual Master in the world of objects. To him this vision was not a piece of fiction or hallucination. It was not an illusion. It was a real experience, pure and simple :

' Truly, seeing Thy golden feet this day, I've
gained release.'[2]

It was true that he had a vision of God's Holy Feet. For a moment, God revealed Himself clearly, like a picture within and possessed his whole-being.

' Fair pictured in my soul His Feet's twin flowers
in grace He gave ;
The Lord, Who in Ēkambam dwells, made here His
chosen seat ;'[3]
' Entering within my breast, He made me His !
His ornament
The gleaming serpent SING WE thus, AND PLUCK
THE LILY-FLOWERS !'[4]

God entered his soul and he knew it to be so, beyond any pale of doubt.

What is it that God let him listen ? This enquiry reveals another interesting aspect of the poet's mystic experience ; that is, the sounds heard by the poet. At the time of the mystic vision, or a little before or after it, the poet heard the sounding anklets. This is proved by the following song :

' That with desire insatiate my soul might ever joy
At sound of tinkling anklets on His glorious sacred Foot,
In dance He moves,—the Lord of Perun-turrai's
car-thronged streets.

[1] The Sacred Cento : 91 P. 80.
[2] Civan's Ways of Old : Line 32 P. 3.
[3] The Lilies : 14 P. 172.
[4] The Lilies : 17 P. 173.

This mighty rapture chanting loud, PLUCK WE THE
LILY-FLOWER ![1]

It is only in the first song of this Decad that the poet refers to the 'action' of the Lord, viz. His placing His Holy Feet on the poet's head, which resulted in his being entirely rid of worldly attachments :

'His sacred Feet,—the twain,—soon as upon my
head He placed,
Help of encircling friends,—the whole,—I
utterly renounced ;'[2]

So we can safely conclude that he heard the sounding anklets soon after the vision. This decad was sung at Tillai. We can infer that when the poet saw Lord Naṭarājā dancing with the anklets sounding round his Lotus Feet, he must have been reminded of his mystic experience at Tiru-perunturai. The sounding of anklet is one aspect of religious mysticism. There are instances of the divine anklets being heard by other mystics also. The Periyapurāṇam sings of an ardent devotee of the Lord, who used to hear the sound of anklets[3] regularly at the time of worship every day. Saint Rāmaliṅkar refers to the holy sound of the anklets worn by the Lord and the thrill it caused when he heard it.[4] These two mystics have heard the sounds of the anklets worn by Lord Civa.

The vision of the Holy Feet developed further into a resplendent glory—an illumination within. Many a mystic has had the same experience of God.

Underhill quotes St. Paul as a typical case and speaks of 'the sudden light, the voice, the ecstasy ; the complete alteration of life.'

Lucie-Christine says of the beginning of her mystical life, 'I saw before my inward eyes these words—'God only' . . . .—they were at the same time a Light, an Attraction and a Power. A Light which showed me how I could belong completely to God alone in this world. . . . . '[5]

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[1] *Ibid* : 18 P. 174.
[2] *Ibid* : 1 P. 168.
[3] Periyapurāṇam. Verse 3776.
[4] Tiru Aruṭpā. Book 6 Poem 'Piḷḷaip peru viṇṇappam' ; 121.
[5] Journal Spiritual de Lucie Christine. P. 11.

A Jundt writes the following about Rulman Merswin :

'Lifting his eyes to heaven he solemnly swore that he would utterly surrender his own will, person and goods to the service of God. The reply from on high came quickly. A brilliant light shone about him ; he heard in his ears a divine voice of adorable sweetness. . . . .'[1]

The Light or the Flame has even been a divine symbol. Saint Rāmaliṅkar had such a mystic vision of Light and that is why he called the way of life he preached 'the Path of Light.' He called God 'Aruṭperuñjōti' i. e. The Great Flame of Grace. Tiruñāṉa Sampantar also refers to God as 'our Flame of Light.'[2] Thus the Form that first manifested itself as the Holy Feet must have gradually metamorphosed into the Flame. This is a miracle indeed. It is incredible. Yet it is true.**[3] Hence he sings :

> 'Becoming a Brahman, graciously making me His own,
> He showed the magic illusion.'[4]

His Feet, and the Flame appear to the poet incredible as 'Indrajāla.' He refers to the Light in various terms such as the 'spotless splendour',[5] 'The Flame of True Wisdom or the Real Flame'[6] etc. In all these lines, he makes it clear that the Being who appeared as the Guru later took the form of the Flame within. Thus the flame of mystic vision and the Guru of the external vision are both manifestations of Lord Civa.

> 'In Perun-turrai's blissful home, a Blessed
> One He dwelt,

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[1] A Jundt, 'Rulman Merswin.' P. 19.

[2] Tiruñāṉa Sampantar—Tēvāram : Tiruppācuram 5.

[3] This reminds us of Milton's frequent reference to the holy Light or the divine spirit inspiring him from within by her 'nightly visitation' and dictating lines of the immortal epic. It is Milton's conviction that God resides in the heart, pure and upright. He addresses the Light as follows :

> 'Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
> Irradiate ; there plant eyes, all must from thence
> Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal light.'
>
> —Paradise Lost. Bk. III P. 52-55.

[4] Civaṉ's Fame. Lines 42-43. P. 10.

[5] Civaṉ's Ways of Old : Lines 62. P. 5.

[6] *Ibid* ; Lines 38. P. 4.

And guileful, in undimmed lustre hid Himself.'[1]

It has been mentioned already that the vision of the Feet corresponding to the external vision of the Preceptor gradually gives place to the mystic awareness of the Reality being manifested as the Feet and the Flame.

How can we categorically define the Form of the One transcending all forms? The poet too is puzzled. He says that the Feet and the Flame are all manifestations of the One. In another context he says,

'O! Form, beheld in radiant LIGHT made manifest.[2]'

Here the glowing red Flame, the personal Form with the Holy Feet, the external vision at Tirup-peruntuṟai in the form of Guru are all synthesised into the One. The realisation of the Preceptor as Civa is a mystic consciousness.

'Thy colour is not red,—nor white Thy form;—
Thou'rt Many, One; Atom, than Atom far
Subtler; the heavenly host in 'wildered thought
know not the way, Father, to reach Thy feet.
Thou showd'st Thy form, Thy beauty didst display,
didst show Thy flow'ry feet! Me wandering, Thine
Thou mad'st, safeguarding me from future 'birth'![3]
Our Perumāṉ, what shall I say, what THINK?

Here also there is consciousness of the divine Feet. Thus the Holy Feet, the Flame, and Civam blend into the ONE.

'... showed things ne'er shown before, showed bliss,
Showed us His lotus foot,'[4]

But this consciousness did not come to the poet-saint in the wakeful state of existence or 'Jāgrata state'. It was a transcendent awareness which came to him without his volition.

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[1] Civaṉ's Fame: Lines 54-55. P. 11.
[2] The Temple Lyric: 9 P. 223.
[3] The Sacred Cento: 25 P. 54.
[4] The Ammāṉai: 6 P. 120.

The Transcendental Experience :

The impact of the spiritual experience is tremendous indeed. Māṇikkavācakar expresses in poetic words the powerful impact of the mystic experience on his heart. This experience is felt at various levels—physically, mentally and supramentally as well.[1] This experience of the soul brings about a change in his mental and spiritual attitude. Accordingly, his thoughts and his very mode of expression undergo a remarkable change, which will be examined later. Here the mental and spiritual experience of the poet are studied.

The poet is at first delighted ; he is full of ecstasy at the experience of the mystic vision. This ecstasy is born not of the mere vision alone, but of his close association in thought with the Divine principle. The poet speaks of the vision as enjoyed by his soul :

> ' Entering within my breast, He made me His ! '[2]

Hence the term, ' entering within ' denotes the act of mingling into one. God is spoken of as the vast ocean of nectar who offered Himself to the poet. Here we have to infer that the poet had a supramental experience. His own inner self became intuitively aware of God, without depending on the external senses ; his ' self ' became identified with the vision, when all subject—object distinctions ceased. This is ' para jāgrata ' experience ;[3] it means realisation independent of the instrumental senses of reasoning. It is the realisation of the self, when it functions, rid of all external aids. The ' self ' or the inner core of being is awake in this state of existence. The ' self ' comes to its own and realises itself, freed from the bondages of the senses—or from the nature of the body.

> ' In waking hour to me a cur Thou gavest grace,—praise.'[4]

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[1] We can think of the influence of Nature on Wordsworth.
' . . . . .sensations sweet
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart ;
And passing even into my purer mind '
(Tintern Abbey : Lines 27-29).

[2] The Lilies : 17 P. 173.

[3] Tiru-aruṭpā.

[4] Praise : Line 144. P. 38.

The supreme joy or bliss caused by the vision permeated his whole being and God alone is and can be the source of such bliss. Therefore He is called 'the ambrosial sea of magic might'.[1] Kāḻi Tāṇṭtavarāyar[2] explains this bliss as follows :

'The limitless sea of nectar which, though tasted and enjoyed repeatedly, remains inexhaustible and infinite. One is never surfeited with it'.[3] Such experience of pure and unalloyed joy is expressed in many contexts of the Tiruvācakam. This first experience of divine bliss serves as a guideline all through his life and therefore, he eulogizes it as often as he can. Let us now look into some of the songs that express the poet's experience of this blessed mood.

The joy is limitless ; it overflows like the floods in river. It is an ocean of pure or spotless joy. All these speak of God's glory in general. In the following lines the poet speaks particularly of his own enjoyment of God's glory.

'. . . .unto me Ambrosia Thou !
O Blest Supreme ! Thou art to honey like
That flows abundant, thrills the soul with bliss !
Thy loving ones enjoy Thee as their own !'[4]

Here God or the experience of God is visualized in terms of honey. The soul is fed with the unsurfeiting divine bliss. The poet calls it 'Honied ambrosia.'[5] The poet struggles hard to express the ineffable. The bliss of self-realization goes beyond words. The joy yielded by God and experienced supramentally, goes beyond sense-perception. The terms, 'honey' or 'ambrosia', are the only ones to give us an idea of supreme bliss. Words are limited as a medium of expression for certain experiences. However, Māṇikkavācakar uses these words denoting sweet objects of food to suggest the Divine Bliss. Honey and sweet food satisfy the palate. It is the nature of the body to enjoy the sweet taste of these objects. It is the mind that makes us conscious of the sweet

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[1] The Sacred Cento : 26 P. 55.
[2] One of the commentators of Tiruvācakam.
[3] Tiruvācaka Vyākiyāṉam by Kāḻi Tāṇṭavarāyar. Part II. P. 480.
[4] The Sacred Cento : 98 P. 83.
[5] Civaṉ's Ways of Old. Line 63. P. 6.

taste. But in the experience of divine joy, the process is reversed. The inner joy or joy of the soul spreads to the mind and to the body.[1] Joy spirals out from the core of his being and is tasted to be sweet by the physical senses. Hence the expressions ' Honey ' and ' Ambrosia'. Inner experience is beyond expression unless concretised in images of sweet delight known to us. The supramental experience of joy must have been felt, at all levels by the poet, physically and mentally. The sweet sensation spreading from within spreads everywhere and the mind cannot help reflecting it. The body naturally reacts to the mind reflecting joy. Thus the sensation of joy spreads all over the body and in the mind :

' My Father ! unto me Ambrosia Thou !
O Blest Supreme ! Thou art to honey like '[2]

His very physical frame melts, thaws and resolves in joy.

' . . . . —Who made thee His, and thrilled thy frame,'[3]

Now the question arises whether this experience of joy is felt simultaneously by the poet's body, mind and spirit. This cannot be true. We have already shown that the ' self ' realises itself only when it is freed from the bonds of senses. During the mystic vision of God, it is the self alone that enjoys truly, independent of the senses. However, this inner joy, the joy of the self is reflected as it were, in the mind and in the body. Māṇikkavācakar

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[1] It is interesting to note here that Coleridge tries to picture in words the inexpressible joy felt in and springing from within the pure soul, in his ' Ode to Dejection '. Coleridge's stanza ' On Joy ' from ' Ode to Dejection ' Stanza V.

' O ! " pure heart ", thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be !
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.
. . . .
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light.'

[2] The Sacred Cento : 98 P. 83.

[3] Ibid : 19 P. 51.

became aware of this mentally and physically, only after this process of reflection. The spirit passes on its joy to the mind and body.[1]

Illumination that resulted from this Experience :

Māṉikkavācakar's experience, born of supramental consciousness, yielded him ' ñāṉa'. It is everlasting knowledge. It means the elimination of all that is not true or that is false or fleeting. The vision of God brings with it this true wisdom instantaneously. This is the reason why the poet calls the sage at Peruntuṟai his Guru. God himself is the Guru. ' God who is formless, complexionless, and who transcends all things, reached this world of time and space, solely for the sake of blessing me as my ' Guru', says the poet in exultant words of joy. Here the term ' who came in Grace ' means one who blessed him with mystic vision. This means that God gave the poet ' true knowledge ' by yielding ' Civa-Anubava ' or the experience of Civam. After attaining such knowledge, the poet is prepared to discard all worldly knowledge attained by learning in this world.

What exactly is the nature of this supreme knowledge ? He was not satisfied with what he learned by studying books, listening to religious men, debating with great scholars of vēda, āgamās, etc. Notwithstanding all these efforts, he was not able to realise God. Consequently he experienced a great inner struggle. But his experience at Tirup-peruntuṟai brought about a thorough change in him. From then on, he was able to concentrate on God and sing his glory.

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[1] The physical part of man is believed to undergo a change into something finer and purer beyond decay even when the spirit is purified. Plato believed in this and Milton also speaks of it in ' Comus ', the famous masque.

cf. ' So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity

. . . .

Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape
The unpolluted temple of the mind
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence
Till all be made immortal.'

Elder Brother's speech P. 251.
Peacock's English Verse Vol. II.

‘ Thou King of Civa-world, by glorious grace didst
change my thought,
And make me Thine.— . . . .’[1]

It is said that a disciple should deserve a teacher as much as a teacher should deserve the disciple. Then only there can be true imparting of knowledge. Māṇikkavācakar's mind was already mature in so far as he had learnt all that could be learned in this world. However, his intellectual quest was still there, seeking for true wisdom. In order to satisfy true craving, God Himself came down as the Guru and gave him true wisdom. Once he gained ‘ true wisdom', all that he has learned before appeared hollow, false or deluding.

‘ Thou cam'st in grace, that all things false might flee,
True Wisdom, gleaming bright in splendour true,’[2]

The knowledge that comes in the wake of mystic experience alone is true, for it binds him fast with God Himself. There is nothing greater than this ; this is supreme. This is the acme of knowledge. All enquiry of religious works has deluded him like a mirage of oasis, that deludes a crowd of thirsty deer that chases it and God's Grace has blessed him with true wisdom like the sudden rains and floods that come from the heavens to quench the thirst of the deer. God's flood of Grace has quenched his intellectual thirst.

‘ The “ demon-car ” of the six sects
Excites the thirst of the large-eyed antelope throng.
And they with eager desire crowd to drink ;
And faint with unquenched thirst haste hither and thither.—
Meanwhile, the heavenly mighty stream
Rises and rushes, crowned with bubbles of delight,
. . . .
It rushes through the cleft of the high hills,’[3]

This is a fine metaphor indeed !

It has already been indicated how God's Grace quenched the poet's thirst for true knowledge. God brought about a thorough

[1] The Supplication : 9 P. 271.
[2] Civaṉ's Ways of Old : Lines 37, 38. P. 4.
[3] The Universe : Lines 79-84 & 88. P. 23, 24.

change in him, by presenting the three-fold vision of feet, sound of anklets and Flame, and by accelerating the God-consciousness. All these details have been examined earlier.

The poet-saint understands how he was unable to attain the true knowledge in the past and how he deserved it after the mystic vision. God alone is the giver of true knowledge. By His will alone he attains true wisdom. All his personal efforts to learn and understand have been in vain. Once he attained self-knowledge, the other vain delusions disappeared of their own accord. The certainty of the knowledge he gained by such mystic experience was established by his intellectual reasoning later. In other words, he was at first finding it difficult to detach his 'self' from this external world, the mind and the body. But once he realised God, he was aware of his 'aloneness'—of his being 'unattached' to the worldly bonds. Therefore, he concluded that he was different from them. He sings,

> 'Truly, seeing Thy golden feet this day, I've
> gained release.'[1]

It is the vision of the Holy Feet that facilitates or serves as the means to get rid of the bonds. But this freedom is not complete, in so far this is not realised in action. This has necessitated the struggle for purgation and the subsequent agonies. These are dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

Awareness of Freedom from Birth :

Our birth is inevitably linked with attachments. It is impossible to be entirely rid of them. The poet realised that he may be freed from birth itself, if he is rid of attachments. Therefore he sings :

> 'To me, a dog, all things not shown before, He showed ;
> all things not heard before, He caused to hear ;
>
> And guarding me from future 'birth', He made me His.
> Such is the wondrous work our Lord hath wrought for me !'[2]

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[1] Civan's Ways of Old : Line 32. P. 3.

[2] The Sacred Cento : 28 P. 56.

The poet realised his aloneness in the world of objects during the first stage of the experience of ' ñāṉa.' The second stage is the realisation of the true nature of the Perception and its association with the Reality of one's self. Let us now examine this second stage, illustrating it from Tiruvācakam.

Māṇikkavācakar frequently uses the term 'enslavement' (the graceful act of God of enslaving) with reference to this experience.

> ' Our King made me His slave, and in the path of grace to keep,
> Made manifest the ancient brightening ray.'[1]

This term means literally, ' one who made a slave of him or enslaved him or held him in thrall'. The poet calls himself a slave of God, not one bought with money, as in this world, but one who became a slave by giving or surrendering all that he had. Thus the term 'becoming a slave' means the spiritual enslavement, that God made of his soul at Peruntuṟai.

> ' . . . . . . Perun-turrai's King ;—
> Who loving pity showed to me that day,
> showed me His jewelled foot to melt my soul,
> My sorrows soothed, in grace made me His own !
> HIS DEEDS WHO KNOW WITH OUR SUPERNAL LORD ARE ONE ![2]

This shows that this spiritual enslavement is a necessary sequence of the experience. God who freed him from the bonds of attachment is his Lord or Master. Prior to the mystic experience, he was deluding himself, led by his own senses, the mind and intellect. The knowledge he gained at that time was not 'real'; it was vain, deluding knowledge. After the mystic vision God gave 'Himself' and offered him 'True wisdom'. Thus in both stages of existence, he had no 'freedom' at all, nor did he have mastery over his own self. In the first stage, it is deluded, in the next stage it is held in thrall. Therefore, he sings :

> ' Thou mad'st my THOUGHT Thy THOUGHT ! Of me, mere cur,

[1] Civaṉ's Fame : Lines 40, 41. P. 10.
[2] The Sacred Word : 9 P. 323.

Thou mad'st the eye rest on Thy foot's blest flower,
Thou mad'st me bow before that flower alone ! My mouth
Thou mad'st to speak abroad Thy gem-like word !
My senses five to fill Thou cam'st, and mad'st me Thine.
Ambrosial Sea of magic might ! O Mount ! Thyself
Thou gav'st, Thy form like wild of roseate lotus flowers,
to LONELY helpless me. Thou Only-Light ![1]

Here the term, 'the lonely helpless me' is interpreted by Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar as the 'loss of freedom and mastery'. The phrase 'Thou Only Light' is interpreted by him as 'the Sun' and the passage is explained as follows :

People grope in the dark before the Sun rises ; the enveloping darkness that prevails then symbolises the poet's ignorance when he was lost in 'ego'. His own intellect is the source of this ignorance before the mystic experience. The self that is enveloped in this ignorance is in the dark, still deluding itself with worldly attachments. Here ignorance itself appears outwardly as knowledge. But this soul itself is misguided by the intellect here. It has no entity or individuality of its own. It cannot see the truth, except when God shows the way. When God reveals Himself in the mystic vision, he reveals the true nature of self and self realises itself. Therefore, 'self' has no independence of its own, to act as it pleases. It never acts ; it is only acted upon.[2]

Thus the self is either deluded or enslaved ; it does not enjoy any freedom of its own. Therefore, it is called 'a slave'. In the former state of existence, he was a 'slave' to ignorance, attachments born of delusions, etc. In the latter stage, God blessed him with a mystic vision and enabled his self to perceive Him, freed him from the worldly delusions that assailed him and made him a slave of his own. The baneful impact of the world and ego is substituted by the salutary influence and mastery of God-head. Māṇikkavācakar refers to this change as :

'The gleaming golden Hill, the flawless Pearl,
the Shrine of tender love

[1] The Sacred Cento : 26 P. 55.
[2] Tiruvācakam Commentary : Kali Tāṇṭavarāyar. Part II P. 48.

Who made me, last of man, His own, in speechless
service glad ! He Whom
Dark Māl and Brahma baffled yet approach not,—
gave Himself, rare Balm !
When shall I dwell in MYSTIC UNION JOINED WITH
HIM,
MY FLAWLESS GEM ?'[1]

The poet acknowledges the soverignty of the Master alone, in triumphant words :

' The King of all ! He came, and made me, too, His own.
Henceforth I'm no one's vessal ; none I fear !
We've reached the goal ; with servants of His saints
in sea of bliss we evermore shall bathe ![2]

Māṇikkavācakar has undergone various stages of development. By his intellectual power he was called a poet. By his efficiency and ability to act, he became a powerful minister. By his love and sympathy of feelings, he was called an ardent ' friend'. After his mystic experience with God at Peruntuṟai, he mellowed into a ' devotee'. This change came about, primarily because of the vision of the Holy Feet of God. Hence his wisdom is aptly styled ' Tiruvaṭi Ñāṉam.'

Parañjōti Muṉivar refers to the poet-saint's attainment of true ñāṉa or wisdom in his book ' the Tiruviḷaiyāṭal'.[3]

According to the philosophy of Śaiva Siddhānta, the poet-saint is at first said to have been bound by attachments because of the power of ego ; this bond of attachment is broken at the time of the mystic vision of God ; this vision gives the poet supreme bliss. During this blessed mood, the distinction between the external world of objects and the inner world of ' being ' disappears ; the inner self realises that it permeates everywhere and feels freed from the hopelessly irredeemable cycle of birth and death. This elucidation of the poet-saint's salvation agrees with the evidences quoted already from Tiruvācakam.

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[1] Mystic Union : 1 P. 243.
[2] The Sacred Cento : 30 P. 57.
[3] Parañjōti Tiruviḷayāṭal, Upatēcappaṭalam : Verse 40.

Once Māṇikkavācakar attained true wisdom, he got rid of his doubts that assailed him in the past. He clung to the knowledge he gained during the awakening as the only means to lead to the supreme goal in his life. Nothing more remains to know or do. What he has known is the only thing worth knowing ; it is the only good on earth that relieves one of the cycle of birth and death. This consciousness grows into an unshakable conviction—the conviction of a true lover of God.

> ' O bliss that ceases not ! O bliss beyond compare !
> His bright flower-foot
> He gave ; to me of kind more base than dogs, He
> showed the perfect way.
> My Chief, who gave me grace sweeter than mother's
> love,'[1]

Usually, even a mystic vision is fleeting ; its impact may also be short-lived. But so far as Māṇikkavācakar is concerned, the experience of the mystic vision affords perennial bliss ; the experience also makes him realise the true nature of his self and enables him to carve out the right code of conduct for himself in future. Thus the first mystic experience is everlasting in its influence, it is a powerful Force, as it were, to change his whole being into something of a finer and nobler medium to experience the same bliss again. The mystic experience is a process of realisation ; a consciousness of the ' immortal diamond ' of the soul in the words of Hopkins.[2]

This illumination or realisation helped and guided him to experience the mystic vision and bliss many a time. There are evidences in the Tiruvācakam to establish this statement. This will be dealt with in the forthcoming chapters.

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[1] The Sacred Cento : 39 P. 61.

[2] Hopkins's Poem 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and a comfort of the Resurrection'.

> ' In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
> I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am, and
> This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,
> Is immortal diamond.'

From Hopkins—Selection Ed. Graham Storey. O.U.P. P. 101.

The Expression of Joy and Wonder :

Māṇikkavācakar eulogizes the vision he had and the true Ñāṉa he gained, in glowing terms of poetry. His wonder grows boundless at his own extraordinary good fortune. While thinking of his own past, he sings that he does not deserve to be chosen for this unique experience. Hence his feeling of wonder. How often, and in how many ways, he expresses his own unworthiness and his wonder !

> ' Devoid of love for Him in sooth was I.
> I know it, and He knows it too !
> And yet He made me His, this too all men
> on earth shall surely see and know.'[1]

Next he humbles and calls himself a dog ; but yet God showered His Grace on him. Boundless indeed is His mercy.

> ' There was no love in me towards Thy Foot,
> O Half of Her with beauteous fragrant locks !
> By magic power that stones to mellow fruit
> converts, Thou mad'st me lover of Thy Feet.
> Our Lord, Thy tender love no limit knows.
> Whatever sways me now, whate'er my deed,
> Thou can'st even yet Thy Foot again to me
> display and save, O Spotless Heavenly One ![2]

His mind has undergone a change, melting with love, after the mystic vision. His mind was as hard as a stone, inert and incapable of motion. But it has been made malleable, having ' been kneaded into a fruit and soaked in a flood of Love.'

Such a flood of feeling, this sensation of great wonder, carries with it a touch of pathos too. His humility is extraordinary. He sheds tears and sobs out words of poetry. Because of God-love, his stony heart melts ; his eyes shed tears ; his mouth utters poetic words. He refers to these physical changes reflecting powerful emotions as follows :

> ' Thou Whom the lords of heaven themselves know not !
> Thy source and end the Vedas cannot trace !

[1] The Humming Bee : 13 P. 148.
[2] The Sacred Cento : 94 P. 81.

Thou Whom in every land men fail to know !
As Thou hast sweetly made me Thine hast called
This flesh to dance on stage of earth,—
me to enjoy Thyself with melting soul,—
In mystic drama, too, hast caused to move,—
pining on earth, Thou Lord of magic power !'[1]

The Peruntuṟai experience is thus a turning point in the life of Māṇikkavācakar. It also served as the first phase in the saint's spiritual progress. With the mystic vision before his eye, the poet begins to ascend, so to speak, the first rungs of the ladder of spiritual life.

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[1] The Sacred Cento : 95 P. 81-82.

4. THE PURGATION OR PURIFICATION OF THE SELF

The mystic experience of God is naturally tremendous in its impact on the self. Once the vision disappears, the mystic makes strenuous efforts towards purgation or purification of the self. This is an important aspect in the lives of mystics, which deserves a close study. Māṇikkavācakar's first vision of God at Peruntuṟai has been already described in detail. The consequent efforts put in by the poet-saint to progress towards purification of self are examined in this chapter.

Evelyn Underhill has made an interesting study of this aspect of mysticism in her book '*Mysticism*'. She has shown how the efforts of the Western mystics towards purgation can be classified. The basic methods given by Underhill can be applied with profit to the lives of the Eastern mystics, as well as to the experience of the mystics all over the world. Whatever be their religious faith, the experience is more or less of the same nature.

Evelyn Underhill says that the mystics who strive towards purgation subject themselves to limitless pains and sufferings. They experience great agony. This is said to result from two causes:

1. The disappearance or vanishing of the blissful vision of God leads to great sorrow. The mystic suffers from the pangs of separation.

2. 'The contrast between the self's clouded contours and the pure sharp radiance of the Real; between its muddled faulty life, its perverse self-centred drifting, and the clear onward sweep of that Becoming in which it is immersed.'[1]

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[1] Mysticism. P. 200.

This is brought home to the mystic in a forceful manner. The man who enjoyed supreme bliss during the experience of mystic vision loses himself in self-pity, self-abuse and repentance at his own unworthiness when the vision has fled. ' The harbinger of that new self which must be born appears under the aspect of a desire: a passionate longing to escape from the suddenly perceived hatefulness of selfhood, and to conform to Reality, the perfect which it has been under its aspect of Goodness of Beauty, or of Love—to be worthy of it, in fact to be real '—says Underhill.[1] Gerlac Patersen also speaks of the nature of this mystic experiences as follows :—

'This showing is so vehement and so strong that the whole of the interior man, not only of his heart, but of his body, is marvellously moved and shaken, and faints within itself, unable to endure it. And by this means, his interior aspect is made clear without any cloud, and comfortable in its own measure to Him whom he seeks.'[2]

Underhill continues to say that it is but natural for the mystics to discard the false experiences of life and passionately long for the true and Real experience of the self, once they have known and tasted its real nature. It is this passionate longing that necessarily leads to a mental storm, conflict and purgation through excessive suffering. They know that this experience of suffering is a necessary concomitant of the mystic experience.[3]

The purgative way means the efforts undertaken by the mystic to renounce the attachments and desires which are the source of all false experience in life. The method to renounce the desires is indicated in the following lines taken from St. John of the Cross :

'In order to overcome our desires and to renounce all those things, our love and inclination for which are wont so to inflame the will that it delights therein, we require a more ardent fire and a nobler love—that of the Bridegroom. Finding her delight and strength in Him, the soul gains the vigour and confidence which enable her easily to abandon all other affections. It was necessary

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] As quoted by Underhill in her book, Mysticism. P. 200.
[3] Mysticism : P. 200-201.

in her struggle with the attractive force of her sensual desires, not only to have this love for the Bridegroom, but also to be filled with a burning fervour, full of anguish . . . .if our spiritual were not on fire with other and nobler passions, we should never cast off the yoke of the senses, nor be able to enter on their night, neither should we have the courage to remain in the darkness of all things and in denial of every desire.'[1]

It is learnt from what he has said that the emotions of the mystics who strive hard to achieve the purgation of the self are two-fold :—

I. The pangs, discomfort, conflict, and pain arising naturally or indulged in voluntarily, because of the loss of the vision and consciousness of one's own unworthiness, and

II. The excessive longing for the Reality or Absolute and the fervour and anguish to see God and enjoy the Bliss.

Tiruvācakam reveals Māṇikkavācakar's efforts towards purification. The two emotional aspects referred to above are also evidenced in his work, coupled with certain unique features of his own life.

I. Pangs, Repentance and Discomfort and Pain of the Self :

(i) *Pangs* :

The pangs are caused by the fadding away of the mystic vision. The essentially tragic feeling is something which is akin to the pangs of separation expressed in the love-lyrics of Caṅkam period.

The vision that afforded supreme bliss is no more and the mystic who has perceived it bemoans his separation from Him. The mystic's love of God is so deep, so overwhelmingly profound, that it can be compared with the deep passion that a lady has for her lover. The God-love, or divine love, maddens the mystics as much as mundane love maddens the lovers in the world.

The Sacred Cento and many other poems of Tiruvācakam express the pangs of separation. The pangs grow more acute as the self progresses towards purification and 'perfection'. They become

[1] As quoted by Underhill in her book, Mysticism : P. 203.

more and more increasingly intense at intervals when the mystic vision of God is denied to the poet-saint. There are various stages in the development of the soul ; and the pangs of separation expressed in the 'Sacred Cento' comprise the first stage. Let us now examine this stage in some detail.

Māṇikkavācakar felt that he was unworthy of such a sublime experience when the mystic vision faded away. The tragic awareness of the loss of divine bliss gives rise to the pangs of separation from God. The vision of God, as it has been mentioned already, was clear indeed, yielding true wisdom or Ñāṉa. The bliss enjoyed during the experience of mystic vision was unique ; it had permeated his very body, life and soul. Naturally, when the vision vanished, he was lost in limitless sorrow. 'The more clear its vision, the more extreme its pain.'[1]

> 'My frame before Thy fragrant foot is quivering
> like an opening bud ;—
> My hands above my head I raise ;—while tears
> pour down, my melting soul.
> The false renouncing, praises Thee ;—with songs
> of triumph praises Thee,—
> Nor suffer I adoring hand to rest ;—O Master,
> look on me ![2]

His hands rise above and are folded up in prayer the moment he thinks of the vision of the Holy Feet of God. Recollection of the vision brings in the prayerful mood. The love and devotion for God inspire his whole being ; his body is electrified and it trembles in response to this powerful emotion. The painful awareness of the separation causes tears to well up in his eyes. His sense of loss is overpowering. It is this agony, this extreme pain caused by forfeiture, a sense of loss, that is expressed in the very first verse of the Sacred Cento. The entire cento has an organised structure revealing a perspective though various emotions are expressed. The first stanza here strikes the key-note, as it were, of the theme of separation and awareness of his own unworthi-

[1] St. Catherine of Genoa.
As quoted by Underhill in her book, Mysticism. P. 203.

[2] The Sacred Cento ; 1. P. 44-45.

ness. He struggles hard to purge his self of this disharmony. This is the way of purification.

The above quoted first verse in 'The Sacred Cento' indicates the poet-saint's realisation of the Absolute. As a contrast, it shows his awareness of the illusions clouding his own mind; his increasing passion for God; his unconsolable grief arising from separation from God and his efforts to break the bonds of attachments and 'free' his mind—the way of purgation.**

The feeling of separation connects the two points so to speak i.e., God at one end and the bonds of attachments at the other. It is this feeling of separation that impels the self to long for the vision repeatedly and nurtures the fervour to flare up into a fanatic zeal to see Him. It is the feeling of separation that gradually leads to a long conflict where the earthly bonds are sundered and lost ultimately. But for the pangs, there would be no 'freedom' for the self. Therefore, this theme of 'separation' is the central point or axis for the penance of purgation.

How does Māṇikkavācakar reveal this 'flood of feeling' in his songs?

'Thou Form unique to even heavenly ones
Unknown! Thou Mystic Dancer, Who didst make me Thine!
Me Thine! On earth, in heaven, or when all these
Have passed away,—WHEN shall I see Thy face?'[1]

'The seed of lies is not destroyed;'—so saying,
Thou hast placed me here!—
All those that were to Thy desire have come, and
reached Thy sacred Foot!—
In depths of fear I sink. O God, Who didst in Ārūr
ask for alms,
What shall I do? SPEAK Thou to me![2]

These words show that notwithstanding the mystic vision, the poet-saint has not yet become entirely worthy of deserving God's Grace. His mind is still assailed by doubts and it wavers

** Pope's Translation differs here.

[1] The Sacred Cento: 43 P. 62-63.

[2] *Ibid*; 81. P. 76.

for want of conviction. Therefore, he does not benefit fully from his first experience of the vision of God. He fears that he will be engrossed in worldly affairs or the illusion of attachments once again. But it must be noted that he is not entirely misled by the life of illusion ; he is 'conscious'—painfully aware of his own erring self ; it is this pathetic awareness that causes him to suffer from the pangs of separation. It is this suffering in separation that paves the way for purgation. This consciousness of his own shortcomings is the one saving factor which helps him to respond to the call of purgation.**

Māṇikkavācakar cries out that he has lagged behind the true disciples of God. His agony is so overwhelming that tears well up in his eyes. He decides to reach Him by intellectual reasoning. But God who has been perceived in the mystic vision is beyond the reach of the intellect. He cannot be seen at will, but memories —painful memories of the bliss haunt his mind. God who cannot be seen again and again becomes dearer and dearer. The poet-saint laments his unfortunate plight and the contrast between him and the other disciples. The sense of loss is too deep for tears. The saint thinks of a poetic simile to express it :

After grazing in the fields the cows return to join their calves. They moo joyfully, while a blind cow which has followed the herd for some distance, is unable to trace its own calf. It simply drifts along, hearing but the cries made by the rest of the herd, and oppressed with the sorrow of the separated mother. It cries aloud only expressing its concern and longing for its young one. Thus his estrangement from the company of the saints is brought out in the simile of the blind cow.

> 'Give, Oh my Owner, to this slave,
> love to Your twin feet.
> The world from which there is no return
> Your devotees have entered ; I have stayed out.
> Like a blind cow lowing when the village cows low,
> I, your slave, inexpert in love unto Your twin feet,

** The following words of W.R. Inge may be compared here :

'The mere fact that we are conscious of our limitations shows that there is something in us which can transcend them'.

—Mysticism in Religion. P. 96.

but filled with longing for You,
stand outside weeping.[1]

The vision of God brings perfect bliss to the poet-saint. Naturally when it fades away, he feels that all life is empty of purpose and meaning. He is vexed at the loss of vision and says :

' When the Great waters fail, the little fishes faint ;'
so reft of Thee
I quake . . . . .'[2]

Similarly, separated from God and suffocated in the emptiness of life, he is struggling hard.

When the vision of God fades away, the poet condemns himself for his own 'unworthiness'. He feels that there is still a trace of attachment lingering in his mind and therefore he is denied the bliss of continuous vision. Naturally, he bemoans his own failings and shortcomings and suffers intensely the pangs of separation. The painful sense of the contrast between ignorance and Light makes the mystic suffer a great mental pain.

Māṇikkavācakar often repents that his unworthiness alone caused the withdrawal of the vision. With utter humility, he expresses his sorrow and repentance :

'Thou Partner of the fawn-eyed Queen ;—Thou Word,
whose end the Word knows not ;—
Ambrosia sweet, to thought unknown ; King, faults of
wretched me Thou bear'st
I babbling tell my woes. Thy saints have reached
the city blest. OUTSIDE
I and my FALSENESS wander here !'[3]

Māṇikkavācakar was fully aware of his limitations, though he had experienced the mystic vision of God. Therefore, he thought that the divine vision resulted from God's own boundless mercy and not because of any of his own merits or deservings. Even though the Absolute was within his soul's reach, for a while,

[1] G. Vaṉmīkanāthaṉ's 'Pathway to God'. Verse 87. P. 199.
[2] 'Forsake me not' : 26. P. 94.
[3] The Sacred Cento ; 85. P. 77.

he was not blessed continuously because of his own grossness of the mind.

> ' OUTSIDE we go, FALSENESS and I !—True love
> to gain I've lost the power.
> This is my gain ! Thy saints to Thee who utterly
> are joined now,
> Know nothing else but Thee ; in acts all glorious
> on their way they go !
> O Civaṉ, they have reached Thy FOOT !'[1]

sings the Saint. When his soul perceived the vision, he felt that all his false desires melted away at that time.[2] Such was the radiance of the Lord.

When he is deprived of this vision, the clouds of attachments gather again and he sobs aloud :

' O Lord, you gave me a sense of Reality. You made me love you and perceive you. You let me enjoy divine bliss. But, fool as I am, I did not realise the supreme glory of the experience. Because you came to me of your own accord, without my effort, so easily. I thought the joy would be permanent and remained indifferent to you. You offered me your grace just like offering a golden vessel to be handled by a child. The child ignorant of its value, takes it for one among the mud vessels. Similarly I did not realise how rare and splendid was the experience of Thy Grace and let it slip away from me. The illusions of life have again and again gathered round me. But true sages without allowing such a rare experience to slip, became one with it and communed with you, while I wallow in the quagmire of illusion. Is it right on your part to leave me thus to suffer ?'

> ' O Half of Her with eyes of glist'ning jet,
> Thou cam'st and mad'st me Thine, with tender hand
> As feeding me from golden cup,—since when
> hard of access I deem Thee nevermore ;
> Thou on Whose Body gleam the ashes white !
> They, LOVING THEE IN TRUTH, HAVE REACH'D
> THE TRUE !

[1] *Ibid* : 86. P. 78.
[2] Civaṉ's Way of Old ; Lines 37-38. P. 4.

But, tell me, is it MEET that Thou should'st go
and leave me here, in falsehood thus to fall ?'[1]

This is the lamenting cry of the poet-saint.

' What other sinners are there like to me,
cur at the Master's Foot ?
Yet not a whit from me to sever is Thy sacred
will ; and thus,
O Primal One, Thy Foot's fair flower if I
should quit, and yet live on,
My soul is iron, stone my mind ; my ear
to what shall it compare ![2]

' O bliss that ceases not ! O bliss beyond compare !
His bright flower-foot
He gave ; to me of kind more base than dogs,
He showed the perfect way.
My Chief, who gave me grace sweeter than
mother's love, I see not now !
Yet in the fire I fall not, wander not o'er
hills, nor plunge me in the sea ![3]

The sentiments expressed by Māṇikkavācakar in all the songs of lamentation may be summed up as follows :

1. The passionate longing to see God.
2. The painful consciousness of getting lost in illusion.
3. The painful consciousness of the cessation of the flow of Ñāṉa.
4. The awareness that separation from divinity is intolerable.
5. The emptiness or feeling of utter desolation resulting from separation.
6. The realisation of the undeservedness of his own mind which obstructs the experience of the mystic vision and the consequent feelings of hatred towards the mind that nullifies the vision.

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[1] The Sacred Cento : 92. P. 80. Pope's translation differs here.
[2] The Sacred Cento : 37. P. 60.
[3] *Ibid* : 39. P. 61.

(ii) *Repentance and Discomfort* :

The separation or the loss of vision made him aware of his unworthiness. At Peruntuṟai he enjoyed supreme bliss when his soul perceived God. But he could not have this experience continuously. The painful contrast between the two stages of his life fills him with great agony. He is full of remorse. Mind's unworthiness and his repentance form the second aspect of the first division of the theme of purgation. It can be classified as follows :—

First category :

He deals directly with the weakness of the mind, dragged by the senses—or contrasts the 'fallen state of the mind' with its glory at the time of the soul's perception of God.

Second category :

He speaks indirectly of his own unworthiness by referring to the vision of God, appearing of its own accord.

Third category :

Though God has manifested Himself in the vision, he did not meditate on the vision lovingly, but was drawn by egoistic tendencies.

Fourth category :

He wonders why God thought of 'enslaving' him who is bound by attachments and turns away from Divinity.

Fifth category :

Sometimes his mind is said to be full of great sorrow caused by the separation. Certain other times, mind is said to be hard, without any love or desire for God, remaining inert like a mere stone.

The first category :—Mind dragged by senses :

The five physical senses which establish our contact with the world of objects are rather strangely related to the mind. They are no doubt instruments or tools of the intellect. However, ultimately related as they are to the mind, the natural quality of

the mind, viz. desire, colours the senses. When they come into contact with the world of objects, they turn the mind towards the objects and make it engrossed by engendering passionate longing in it for the objects. These passions then grow more and more intense and the mind is agitated and confused. Thus the senses 'enslave' the mind. As opposed to this, the desire may first spring in the mind and spiral out to the senses which, in turn, fan the aforesaid burning passions in the minds (serving as its instruments). Thus the mind may serve the senses, vitiating them by directing them towards objects or the 'senses' might corrupt the mind towards 'objects.' Men become victims of both kinds of vitiation. The mind and the senses work often in correlation with each other. They work in unison so fast that sometimes it is difficult to decide the preceding factor. The realisation of reality or the Absolute might for a while put an end to desire or attachment or passion in the mind ; but soon the mind is overwhelmed by the powerful senses. They drag away the mind towards objects in a wild manner like uncontrollable horses dragging a rider or a chariot. The intellect and the senses are not directly related to each other ; therefore the senses cannot be disciplined by the intellect. The senses are physical and they serve the interest of the intellect only by means of the mind. When we seek to use the senses for intellectual growth, they may serve the purpose, or they may cause 'desire' to spring in the mind and tempt it.[1] However much the mind strives to stand by the intellect, it is susceptible to be corrupted by the senses.

Māṇikkavācakar condemns the senses in many songs. He blames them for corrupting his own mind after the experience of the vision. He 'lashes' them out, for deluding the mind.[2] His mind ought to respond to the demand of the spirit or call for spiritual relationship with the perceived Reality but it yields deplorably to the demands of the senses. The senses are, therefore, condemned as deluding, fraudulent, cruel instruments which puzzle or befuddle the spirit. The mind ought to revolt against such puzzling confusion but no ! it yields to the baneful influence of the senses,

[1] This is exactly what happens in the Fall of Eve as depicted by Milton in his Paradise Lost. Eve's mind is tempted through her 'senses' which are attracted towards the forbidden fruit. Paradise Lost. Bk. V.

[2] 'Forsake me not': 11. P. 89.

forgets all clarity of thinking and engages itself in the illusory objects of the world.[1]

Generally mystics have recourse to contemplation to discipline the mind and attain Ñāṉa or spiritual knowledge. Māṇikkavācakar also practises contemplation. He has the innate potential for indulging in contemplation, but then even his mind is overpowered by the senses. Though impelled by a sense of duty and longing, he feels as though he is a 'hollow man' without any competency and inner strength to achieve anything. He explains this by means of a vivid simile :

Just as a crowd of ants around a worm bite and pierce its body all over and suck away all its little strength and its very life, the senses attached to the worldly affairs besiege my mind, hunting out all my innate power. Without protest or revolt I submit myself thoroughly to the evil preying upon me.

> 'Like worm in midst of ANTS, by senses gnawed
> and troubled sore,
> Me, utterly alone, Lo ! Thou'st Forsaken ; Thou
> Whom fiery death obeyed ;
> Whose fragrant flowery Foot the heavenly ones
> attain, and they
> Who know ; O Mighty One, Who from Thy servants
> partest not !'[2]

Even the slightest swerving from the spiritual path appears to the mystics an unpardonable crime, while they are struggling hard towards their goal. They walk as on a razor's edge adopting Truth as their mission and they cannot brook any lapse, however slight it be. They keep themselves under a close rigorous watch, suspecting even the slightest stir that might work against their realization of self. They might not do wrong ; but they are afraid of the susceptibilities of their own minds, which are by nature inclined towards their physical senses. Hence their dread of the senses. Hence their efforts to keep the mind under strict surveillance.

It is against this background that we ought to examine the poet's oft-repeated complaints against his 'senses.' Every time he

[1] *Ibid* : 28 P. 94.
[2] Forsake me not : 25. P. 93.

speaks of sensual power, his inner self is vexed at it and is in terrible conflict with the experience of the mystic vision. He suspects even the slightest stir of the mind towards sensuality as a big crime to be rigorously condemned and cautiously eradicated. Therefore, his statements satirising his own mind appear to be necessarily exaggerated. His dread of senses is expressed in terms that reflect abundant caution on his part. It may be apt to take such expressions as poetic exaggeration, just to heighten the emotional effect. Such passages reveal more than the mere figure of exaggeration, nor do they appear to be totally true. Shall we say that he blames himself for the general lapses of men? But then, how are we to account for genuine feelings of self-pity, repentance or remorse that he expresses? These feelings could not be accounted for, unless he has personally felt the lapses within; we can only conclude that the poet was highly vexed at his mind's susceptibility. As an idealist, he must have been extremely suspicious of the least mental slur on his part.

This awareness of inner lapses naturally fills his heart with a terrible anguish. The scathing attacks on the mind result from the painful awareness of its susceptibility. Māṇikkavācakar dreads sex—and condemns the mind that yields to it.

> ' . . . .like milk ' neath churning stick I'm stirred
> by wiles of those of fawn-like eyes.
> To Civaṉ's city go I not, where grace as honey
> to the soul is given;
> To cherish soul within the body, still I eat,
> and garments still put on ![1]
>
> ' With flow'ry arrows in the spring-time comes
> the god of soft desire,
> And witching smile of maidens fair, ...
> Poor soul,—that pants and melts through these,—
> Who made thee His, and thrilled thy frame,
> Today hath gone and dwells in heaven; yet see,
> thou still art lingering here !'[2]

The simile of the ' churned curd ' and the expression ' poor soul ' reveal that the capacity of the mind for concentration and medita-

[1] The Sacred Cento: 40. P. 61.
[2] The Sacred Cento: 19. P. 51.

tion on the Divine, is frittered away in lustful pursuits. Lust brings about the ruin of the mind. So it is to be condemned and the mind that shows even the slightest inclination towards it is also to be ruthlessly scorned and checked.

The second category : *The vision of the Lord Himself* :

Māṇikkavācakar is fully convinced that he had the vision of God not because of his own worthiness, but because of God's own mercy. God has volunteered to reveal Himself to the poet-saint. The unknown and unknowable Absolute, the Impersonal Being, formless, colourless and limitless—chose to appear in the form of a Guru or Preceptor and enabled him to have easy access to His grace, by facilitating mystic vision. God chose the poet as His favourite and showered His abundant grace on him, even though the poet feels unworthy of it all. Naturally, his mind is filled with awe and reverence which he expresses in many songs. Some of them are as follows :

1. Attracted by Thy name and impelled by a longing to attain thee there are many, who do penance even by standing on their heads, submerging themselves in deep waters. All of them who suffer so much have been set aside in my favour. Thou has chosen me as your own.[1]

2. Oh ! this fellow is the basest of all beings, How can he ever hope for salvation—Thinking so, God Himself has condescended out of pity to make him his slave.[2]

3. Even though the celestial beings or ' Devas ' struggle hard to see you, you made me your own by revealing your Personal form and Holy Feet. Oh ! how extremely blissful I am ![3]

The third category :

Māṇikkavācakar's mind was pulled in two opposite directions after he had experienced the mystic vision. One was the contemplative mood. The other was the usual inclination towards objects of the sense or attachments. The former mood turns the mind towards Heaven—towards God, the latter pulls his self down to

[1] The Sacred Cento : 21. P. 52.
[2] *Ibid* : 78. P. 75.
[3] *Ibid* : 25. P. 54.

worldliness. The former is a blessed mood of pure and spotless love resulting from the dazzling experience of the mystic vision of Radiance or God. It is love that accepts or acknowledges God alone as Master and himself as His willing slave or 'Servant'. Therefore, it is that the poet frequently uses the term 'He enslaved me' as we have already mentioned.**

It is generally held by mystics that they do not belong to this world but to God. They are engrossed in God-love, which is fervent like a powerful intoxicant. This dedication is a 'fine frenzy'[1] which possesses their soul. In such a mood, Māṇikka-vācakar experiences the physical responses of thrill followed by trembling and tears. The divine frenzy inspires his poetic imagination and he pours forth unpremeditated eulogies of God. At such times, his mind is thoroughly infused with memories of the mystic vision. It is then entirely rid of worldliness. It is full of 'vairākya' or the adamant conviction that sets at nought all the pleasures of worldly life or influence of pelf and power. It is proof against the temptations. Even the glories of the 'Indrapata' are discarded in his mind.

'I ask not bliss of Indra, Māl, or Ayan̲ ;—
 though my house and home
Be ruin'd, friendship form I none save
 with Thine own ;—though hell's abyss
I enter, I unmurmuring go, if grace divine
 appoint my lot ;—'[2]

In the next verse, the poet thinks of the next stage of the process of Mortification viz. discarding the very consciousness of the world and ego. He exclaims !

'Transcendent Good ! Owner and Sire ! Thy servant
 melting things on Thee :
In raptures meet I utter forth my fever'd
 soul's ecstatic joys,

** This attitude of mind, acknowledging God's sovereign sway as the Master, is in accordance with Saivite tradition.

[1] Shakespeare speaks of the poet's eye rolling in a 'fine frenzy'. (A Midsummer Night's Dream).

[2] The Sacred Cento : 2. P. 45.

Still wandering from town to town ; while men
cry out, ' A madman this ;'
And each one speaks, with mind distraught,
discordant words. O, when comes death ?'[1]

In fine, the poet-saint longs for the day when he will be utterly rid of all thoughts of ego. Thus the first half of the second verse expresses the need for detachment, the second half and the third verse speak of mortification and resolution and independence of the mind. But such an attitude of the mind that discards worldliness lasts as long as there is unwavering faith or conviction. His mind must have strayed along ' other things ' because of its contact with the world of objects, notwithstanding the experience of the mystic vision. Then the resolutions of the mind formed earlier seem to be cast to the winds ; they become mere memories, or old dreams. They seem to fade away. The attractions of the world seem real. In a meditative mood, he recalls this deplorable attitude of his mind. The contrast between what he was or aims to be and what he is, is bewildering. Therefore, it is that he condemns himself in remorse.

It must be noted that in all such moods of desolation and self-condemnation there is this thought that Ñāṉa is the only means of salvation. This thought is the one saving factor that runs through all the songs of despair and agony like a fine unseen thread.

' Through Thine expanding locks the FLOOD pours down ;
the Bull is Thine, Lord of the heavenly ones !'—
They sang, and stood, with panting, melting souls,
like torrent plunging in th' abyss ! and I,
With yearning soul I heard ! Thou mad'st me Thine !
Yet now from head to foot, I melt not ;—from my eyes
The rushing waters pour not down ;—my heart
is stone ;—both eyes are wood to SINFUL me ![2]

Here he wants the mind to permeate the whole body and experience the ' sensations sweet '[3] felt by it in the vision of God. The fact that it did not experience such a bliss is the cause of his despair.

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[1] *Ibid* : 3. P. 45.
[2] The Sacred Cento : 21. P. 52.
[3] Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey. Line 28.

The eyes might have shed tears at one time, as an expression of pure love. But the poet knows that the mystic experience is too deep for tears. Hence he wants the body to be turned into eyes and pour forth tears in a torrent, so as to express the tremendous impact of the great Bliss he had experienced. He feels that his senses do not respond adequately or rise up to his expectation in the outward expression of his great bliss.

In another song he complains bitterly as follows :

God revealed Himself to me—and made me realise my real self. He claimed me as His own and declared Himself my master. But lost in the contemplation of that Divine ecstasy, I have not been moved to sing, or dance and forget myself.

‘ Thou ent'ring stood'st by me fast bound IN SIN ;
as one who says, ‘ I 'm sin's destroyer, come !'
Thyself announcing thus, Thou mad'st me Thine,—
becam'st my mighty Lord. Like iron statue, I
Now sing no praise, nor dance, nor weep, nor wail,
nor faint with bliss. Behold, O Primal One,
To Thee I make my plaint ; nor know how this
with me shall end, Thou Who art First and Last ![1]

It must be noted that the very songs that express the poet's anguish serve as the source for the experience of mystic vision at Peruntuṟai which has been dealt with in an earlier chapter. In other words, the songs of desolation are not exclusively of despair, but they also reveal the poet's awareness of the glory of God's Grace as revealed in the vision. The memory of the mystic vision is ineradicably and indelibly impressed in his mind. Thus the existence of the longings opposed to each other causes the mental agony. The poet tries to present the lapses of the mind to the mind itself. One entire decad is thus an apostrophe to the mind, with the counter-pointing of opposite emotions. The poet expresses his anguish, his profound emotion and his longing for purgation in a style that is most touching indeed.

[1] The Sacred Cento ; 22. P. 52-53.

The lapses of the mind mentioned in the songs may be classified as follows :

1. The mind is not indulging in an incessant sorrowing quest of the Lord.

‘ Thou seekest Him not through every street ;
thou wailest not ;[1]

2. The mind has not given up self-love and ego even after it has been blessed with the vision of Civa, whose celestial form is smeared with the sacred ashes, which indicates the eradication of false-self, egoism and attachment.

‘ My foolish senseless HEART, that changing,
RUIN bring'st to me,
Henceforth I trust thee nevermore ;—assuredly
on Civaṉ's mighty arm
The ashes thickly smeared thou saw'st, yet
melted'st not ; this body's bonds
Thou rendest not,—nor can I bid restore the
ruin thou hast wrought.'[2]

3. The mind enjoyed once the supreme bliss of Civānubhava ; now in separation all that bliss is gone. Is it right for the mind to forget him ?

‘ Perish, O restless mind ! before the Master Absolute,
A dog I lay;—Thou didst enjoy His fragrant flowery Foot;—
But now thou'rt severed like a young and tender shoot ;
all former bliss
Hast lost ! Truly I deem Thy wisdom and Thy greatness
measureless ![3]

Mustn't I call out to you, your name, and your praise in excessive and fervid longing ? But I haven't done anything of the like O ! Lord.[4]

[1] The Sacred Cento : 31. P. 58.
[2] The Sacred Cento : 33. P. 59.
[3] *Ibid* : 34. P. 59.
[4] *Ibid* : 45. P. 63.

The fourth category :

The poet asks of God why he enslaved him. The question is born of an intense tragic feeling. He who was happy to be ruled over by God now asks the question why God chose to take him into his fold. His own undeservedness makes him disgusted with his self ; he wonders why God should think it proper to reveal Himself to such a ' base-minded ' one, he asks.

' Are there not more " qualified "—or better deserving disciples —Do I deserve to be accepted as your devoted slave ?'[1]

Although I act like one rid of desires, I let many a desire lurk in my mind—how is it you chose me as your devotee ?[2]

This does not mean that he poses to be a genuine devotee. No, he is only sad, boundlessly sad, that contemplation of God fails to be fruitful when attachments lie hidden in the mind. He only mourns over the incapacity of the mind to totally eradicate worldliness.

The fifth category :

The poet's mind is also said to be unmoved by separation from God. This view does not necessarily contradict the other view regarding the mental anguish. The mind experiences the ' opposites '—now it is full of anguish ; now it is not ; at one time it is moved beyond limits, at another time, it seems to be inert. This only shows the fluctuating or the oscillating tendency of the mind to go to extremes. It also shows that the mind is engrossed in other pursuits. We can say that his songs reflect the various moods of the mind. When it is inclined towards good nature, he thinks of the loss of vision and mourns over it.

' God does not will it that I should be separated from Him, even for a moment. But I am too much of a base fellow who cannot consent to His will. Therefore, though separated from Thy Holy Feet, so far, I do not feel the pangs ! Normally, unable to bear the anguish of parting with you, I should have shattered my head to pieces on a rock ! But look ! I lack the conviction to do so. Oh ! my mind, Thou art stone.'[3]

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[1] The Sacred Cento : 23. P. 53.
[2] *Ibid* : 24. P. 54.
[3] The Sacred Cento : 37. P. 60.

In another song he says :

'I am now separated from my beloved Master, dear to me as my very life, and full of loving—kindness like a mother. Still, the moment I am separated from his divine presence—How is it I do not choose to fall in fire or roll down from a hill and die? What an attachment to this 'body'![1]

As the pangs of separation increase, they infuse in his mind a fervid longing and love for the unseen Reality, besides giving him the inner strength to battle against the mind's attachments to self-Love. Even during the period when he realises his mind's unworthiness, he is capable of losing himself in meditation when the love of God overflows in his heart and fills his whole being to such an extent that he exclaims in rapture.

'. . . . . Nor do I crave
Even heaven itself to gain. No power to rule
this earth do I esteem.
. . . .
Our only Lord ! I fainting cry : 'When comes the day
I find Thy grace ?'[2]

The songs mentioned above illustrate the point that Māṇikkavacākar subjects himself to a ruthless scrutiny, assailing his mind of its temptations in the background of his mystic experience of the Absolute. His self-criticism reminds us of a passage in Underhill, where she deals with the biography of Rulman Merswin.

'Thus, we read that Rulman Merswin, "swept away by the transports of Divine Love, did not surrender himself to the passive enjoyment of this first taste of Absolute Being, but was impelled by it to diligent and instant self-criticism. (நைச்யாநு சந்தானம் in Vaiṣṇava tradition). He was 'seized with a hatred of his body and inflicted on himself such hard mortification that he fell ill.'[3]

The ceaseless self-criticism or self-examination, made the poet hate this world. As his mind gradually learns to give up attach-

[1] *Ibid*; 39. P. 61.
[2] *Ibid*: 12. P. 48.
[3] Mysticism. P. 202.

ments, or self-love, the feeling of antipathy towards the world also grows in intensity.

> ' Here these earthly joys I bear not, ...—I
> all renounce !'[1]

The body, its senses, and the Mind that rules arbitrarily like a dictator, ill-advised by them both, are all disgusting to the poet and he is fed up with them. The grossness of the body and the consequent hatred of it all is expressed in the following :

> ' I can't endure, our Guru, in this changing
> straitened frame to " bide. "[2]

> ' O MASTER MINE ! They think on Thee, Thy loving
> ones, with rapture filled ;
> They're Thine, Thy Foot I saw them join.
> Yet here more mean than village cur
> I dwell ; my heart no rapture feels ;
> my mind is stone, nor melts within.
> This body vile I still must guard and here
> abide,—such is THY WILL !'[3]

To the seeker the body itself is felt to be an impediment. It appears to Māṇikkavācakar that the body is a prison, a foul smelling dungeon where the spirit is imprisoned. Hence he hates it all the more. But still he lacks the courage to annihilate the body and free the spirit. Why ? If he is to get rid of this body, then how to enjoy His bliss ?—Here Māṇikkavācakar also asks the Hamletian question whether death solves the problem at all. He says, that like a birdling coming out of an egg, even if he ' comes out of this body ' (dies), he does not know how to attain salvation.

> ' Thou Infinite, by men yet seen ! Beyond eye's ken
> Thou Essence gleaming bright ! Here, like a fledgling, I
> Would gladly leave this faulty frame ; yet know I not—
> Dweller in this sense-world—how I may Thee put on.'[4]

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[2] The Sacred Cento : 65. P. 70-71.
[2] Civan̲'s Ways of Old : Lines 84-85 P. 7.
[3] The Sacred Cento : 56. P. 67.
[5] *Ibid* : 44. P. 63.

'I may not quit, and see Thy face,—Thou Lord of
Civa-world !—I fear,
And SEE NOT HOW TO GAIN THE SIGHT !'[1]

The 'attachment' is the false identification of the '*self*' with the *body*. This is '*self-love*.' It is this self-love that is most potent of all attachments ; the love for 'oneself' is internal while all other attachments are external. The love of ego or self-love is the most baneful, for it is the greatest hurdle in the path of a devotee. Māṇikkavācakar struggles hard to quell his self-love besides all other attachments.

Under these five heads, the wails of agony uttered by the poet in this struggle have been mentioned.

(iii) *Pain*

This forms the third division of the first aspect namely, the pains inflicted or courted voluntarily by the mystics, in their efforts towards detachment.

The war with the mind and body results in intolerable pain. It is the pangs of separation (from the experience of bliss) that cause both a sense of unworthiness and great agony. This sense of unworthiness leads to a hatred of the body and mind ; this, in turn, leads to the longing for communion with God. This longing for divine bliss leads to the breaking away of all bonds of attachment.

When exactly does this struggle of detachment begin ? As Evelyn Underhill points out, 'it begins when the pangs of separation and suffering are dominant in the mind of the mystic.'[2] Actually when this struggle begins, the longing for God increases in intensity until it leads to unbearable anguish and suffering. Both the fervid yearning and suffering go together. As St. John of the Cross, says—the self 'wills' to suffer for God. St. Teresa says, 'Let me suffer or die.'[3] Evelyn Underhill also subscribes to this view point and explains : 'Only this deep and ardent passion for a perceived object of love can persuade the mystic to those unnatural acts of abnegation by which he kills his lesser love of the world of sense,

[1] *Ibid* : 83. P. 77.
[2] Mysticism. P. 200-201.
[1] As quoted by Underhill in her book, Mysticism. P. 201.

frees himself from the remora of 'desire', unifies all his energies about the new and higher centre of life.'[1]

How far is this true of Māṇikkavācakar ?

There is no evidence in Tiruvācakam to show that Māṇikkavācakar became an ascetic or Sanyāsi. But what is it to be an ascetic except to cultivate true detachment in the mind ? Therefore, there is no need for one to externally adopt the ways of an ascetic, by wearing safron robes, etc. if the mind is free from attachment. Underhill again promptly points out, 'The poverty of the mystics, then, is a mental rather than a material state. Detachment of the will from all desire of possessions is the inner reality. It is the poor in spirit, not the poor in substance, who are to be spiritually blessed.'[2]

The evidences in Tiruvācakam, reveal that Māṇikkavācakar cultivated this mental detachment, tried to commune with God, longed and suffered intensely for attaining this goal and ultimately attained it. If he hated the world, it is only because he found it to be a terrible obstruction in the way of realization. These inborn attachments are extremely difficult to be got rid of, and for Māṇikkavācakar too, it was a struggle.

This struggle was fought and won in the mind, without any external show of asceticism. The vision at Peruntuṟai made him realise that God is the centre of all life—'The still, centre point' towards which all life ought to move. God whom he calls 'the prime of Being'[3]—is the only one to love and the vision gave him that conviction. Therefore he struggled hard and suffered to move towards Him.

II. *The excessive longing for the Reality or Absolute* :

He knew that he could attain God's grace only by intense longing of the mind to see God. At the same time, it is only by this excessive longing that the mind itself could be saved from the attractions of the world. Thus the means for attaining divine Bliss is in the mind itself, by turning it towards God in deep

[1] Mysticism. P. 203.
[2] *Ibid* : P. 211.
[3] Forsake me not : 23. P. 93.

contemplation. The means resorted to by Māṇikkavācakar to develop this fervid passion for God are

(*a*) a dedicated worship of the Lord.

(*b*) Intimate contact with the disciples of God or His devotees.

(*c*) Sincere prayer to God for infusing divine love in his mind.

(*d*) Pleading to save him from the besetting attachments of self-love.

(*a*) *Worship* :

Māṇikkavācakar tries to eradicate the lapses of his mind by various means. It was his complaint that often his mind tends to forget God. So he wants to strengthen God-love by the traditional means of prayerful worship.

' By THOUGHT, by deed, by hearing, or by speech,
or by these wretched senses five,
I failed in days of old Thy truth to reach ;—
I, low and foolish one.
I passed not through the fire, my heart
burst not with shame.
To Thee, O Father, even yet may I attain !
May I yet dwell with Thee !'[1]

' No penance have I done, nor bowed, with hand
unstinting scatt'ring flowers ;
Born all in vain,—to ' cruel deeds ' a thrall,—
the bliss of Civaṉ's heav'n,
Amongst Thy loving ones, I've fail'd to gain ;
see, and in grace bestow
On me, Thy slave, consummate life beneath
Thy feet, Supernal Lord !'[2]

' My inmost self PINES not, as were befitting,
for Thy sacred Foot ;
Nor melts in love ; I bring no wreath ; speak
out no worthy word of praise ;
Within the shrine of Him, the King of gods,
perform no service due ;

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[1] The Sacred Cento : 79. P. 75.
[2] *Ibid* : 5. P. 46.

Nor move in dance. To death I haste !
Thou Whom true wisdom bringeth nigh ![1]

' I ever pine Thy flow'ry feet to see,—Thy slave,
dog though I am !
I sit, no fitting flowers present, my tongue
no rising raptures speaks.
Thou Who the well-strung golden bow didst
bend ! Ambrosia of Thy grace
If Thou give not, I PINE,—a wretch forlorn,—
what other can I be ?'[2]

At times, he doubted whether worship through the five senses would help him to see God.

' When PONDERING Thee the thought goes forth,
to reach the bound desired by fitting word
Is not a whit attainable ; nor are these things
one hears through forms of speech.
Thee, Who art all the world, the senses five
know not,
How GAIN the Father's Foot that rests in all
that is and every sphere beyond ?'[3]

This self-criticism shows that the poet looked upon worship as a means to purify the mind. He began concentrating his mind on worship, to restore the divine vision and obtain Ñāṉa. The poet tried to contemplate on God by totally dedicating the senses and the mind to His glory. He wishes ardently that this whole-hearted worship should ultimately restore the supreme bliss of mystic vision to him.

(*b*) *Contact with God's disciples* :

It is necessary to create the right atmosphere for the mind to meditate on God. Therefore, the poet-saint loved the company of the true devotees of God. He wanted to spend most of his time with them. Since it was his goal to realize God, he felt happy

[1] *Ibid* : 14. P. 49.
[2] The Sacred Cento : 13. P. 49.
[3] *Ibid* : 76. P. 74.

in the company of those who had that realization. He shared with them, the bliss of their experience. With ecstasy he sang and danced in their company.[1] Sometimes he mourns that he is not worthy of the company of the true disciples. However, he says that he too appears to be thrilled with God-love like them.

'I shall enter beneath Thy Foot which is mine !
'mid saints that adore I standing
Shall laugh, glad as I gaze on the well-known
form ! shameless dog tho' I am !
No melting love is here ! To see Thee,——
to be made Thine own,——can I
Be meet ? This abject state, Father !
behold, 'tis past my power to BEAR ![2]

This shows that he was yearning that he should be worthy of such a good fortune of moving with His disciples. This means that his mind should be totally purged or purified of all dross—of all desires so that he sould obtain the beatific vision again. Therefore, he prays :

'Like oil was I poured in fierce fire of
glancing dartlike eyes,—
Lo ! THOU'ST FORSAKEN ME ! Whose word
erst joined me to Thy asints,
Who ever worship at Thy fragrant flowery
Feet ; my Lord !
My Master, faulty though I am, forsake
me not ! The will I SING.[3]

(c) *Praying to Him for His love* :

Māṇikkavācakar was convinced that by means of pure love alone, he could deserve God's grace. It is love and friendship that enabled the true devotees to commune with Him.

'. . . . . Our Perumān ;
Who erst made those Thine own who'd
passed by love
O'er birth and death. . . . .'[4]

[1] The Sacred Cento : 30, 98. P. 57, 83.
[2] *Ibid* : 60. P. 68, 69.
[3] Forsake me not : 44. P. 100.
[4] The Sacred Cento : 24. P. 54.

'Hail O my God ! In grace behold me ; Hail !
Hail ! I pray Thee melt my soul within me ,
make me Thine ! '[1]

'MY SAGE, save to Thyself there's none to whom I cling ;—
in me, deceitful one,
No part from mingled falseness ' scapes ; I'm
falsehood's self !—Partner of Her whose dark
Eyes gleam, come Thou to me ! the love Thy
true ones feel,—
Who at Thy jewell'd Feet in love commingling
rest,—mine be it too, I PRAY ![2]

' All FALSE am I ; FALSE is my heart ; and FALSE
my love ; yet, if he weep,
May not Thy sinful servant Thee, Thou Soul's
Ambrosial sweetness, gain ?
Lord of all honied gladness pure, in grace unto
Thy servant teach
The way that he may come to Thee ![3]

He too longed earnestly for such spotless love. He expressed this desire as his prayer. He contrasts himself with the true devotees and says—

' O ! Lord, I have none to help me but Thee, the love that impelled Thy true disciples must spring in my heart as well '.[4]

(*d*) *Plea to save him from the besetting attachments of self-love.*

Quite a large number of songs deal with this theme. They are all steeped in sorrow, reflecting the great inner struggle and its severity. The poet prays to God for His mercy to strengthen his mind. It is only by His grace that the mind could be inflamed with pure love and attuned to the mystic experience of God. He experienced two powerful feelings at the time of the mental struggle.

1. The feeling of hope that God is sure to bless him and
2. The feeling of diffidence or doubt that God may not be kind to him because his prayer is not granted.

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[1] *Ibid* : 64. P. 70.
[2] *Ibid* : 73. P. 73.
[3] *Ibid* : 90. P. 79.
[4] *Ibid* : 73. P. 73.

The obstacles in his way of communion with God seem at one time irremovable. But this awareness makes him suffer all the more to attain purity of heart and mind. He longs for God to help him in his efforts though he knows that God's Grace is not easily obtained. When he could not obtain it, his anguish knows no bounds ; at the same time he hopes for His blessings to save him from the temptations of life. Thus the emotions seem to be in an apparently irreconcilable contradiction and conflict. *Hope* and *despair* spring together or in quick succession. The mind swings to extremes until it can be steadily rooted in the bed-rock of God-experience. Some of the verses that illustrate the two conflicting emotions may be examined.

Despair :

Will he call me and accept me as his devotee at all ?[1]

' . . . . Me evil cur, lowest of all,
Hast Thou not made Thine own ? And wilt Thou
let me go cast out from Thee ?
Then who will deign to look on me ? What shall
I do, O Perumāṉ ? '[2]

Wicked though I be, you maddened my soul at Peruntuṟai. Will you forsake me now ?

' . . . . Me too,
deceitful, mean, within Thy temple gates
Thou fill'd'st with frenzy ; mad'st to join the band
of Thy great loving ones ! '[3]

I fear whether Thy Grace will redeem me at all from the beset ting sins of attachment. I perspire at the thought. Will you forsake me ?

' What is Thy way of glorious grace that PUTS
AWAY my sin ?
I ask with awe ; THOU'ST LEFT ME,—
UTTARA-KOCA-MANGAI'S KING ; '[4]

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[1] The Sacred Cento : 46. P. 64. (Here Pope's translation differs.)
[2] The Sacred Cento : 59. P. 68.
[3] *Ibid* : 96. P. 82.
[4] Forsake me not : 8. P. 88.

I wander about finding no one to save me. Will you also forsake me?

' I wandered weary, none to say ' Fear not ! '
Like lightning's flash
Behold, THOU HAST FORSAKEN ME ! Thou Truth
beyond compare ; '[1]

Hope :

' Our Lord, Thy tender love no limit knows.
Whatever sways me now, whate'er my deed, '[2]

It must be noted that he was assailed more often with doubts than strengthened with hope. Consequently, till a particular stage there are more songs expressing doubts and despair. Out of excessive agony, the poet goes to the extent of even finding fault with God.[3]

Underhill speaks of the end of self-love under two heads-Detachment and Mortification.

Detachment :

Detachment is said to be a negative aspect of purgation, in so far as it leads to the ' stripping ' or purging away of those superfluous, unreal and harmful things which dissipate the precious energies of the self.[4]

Underhill also points out that as attachments fall off the self, (while the process of purgation is going on) the mystic perceives the vision of God and attains illumination.[5] She quotes Jacob Boehme who says :

' Finding within myself a powerful contrarium, namely the desires that belong to the flesh and blood I began to fight a hard battle against my corrupted nature, and with the aid of God I made up my mind to overcome the inherited evil will, to break

[1] *Ibid* : 16. P. 90.
[2] The Sacred Cento : 94. P. 81.
[3] Forsake me not : 46, 49. P. 100, 101.
[4] Mysticism : P. 204, 205.
[5] *Ibid* : P. 226.

it, and to enter wholly into the love of God. . . . This, however, was not possible for me to accomplish, but I stood firmly by my earnest resolution, and fought a hard battle with myself. Now while I was wrestling and battling being aided by God, a wonderful light arose within my soul'. [1]

It is interesting to note Underhill's comment on this passage :

'In these words Boehme bridges the gap between purgation and illumination : Showing these two states or ways as co-existing and complementary one to another, the light and the dark sides of a developing mystic consciousness. As a fact, they do often exist side by side in the individual experience'. [2]

The process of purgation goes hand in hand with the realisation of the Absolute as a 'wonderful Light'. This is the reason why the agony caused during the struggle of purgation and the joy of realisation alternate in the mystic's life. Māṇikkavācakar's experience of the opposite of feelings of pain and pleasure can be aptly stated in Underhill's words :

'Such prolonged co-existence of alternating pain and pleasure states in the developing soul, such delays in the attainment of equilibrium is not infrequent. . . The struggle of the self to disentangle from illusion and attain the Absolute is a life struggle.' [3]

The mind is gradually freed of attachments. During the very process of this purification the mind grows in Ñāṉa or True wisdom ; the mystic power of the mind also matures leading to complete enlightenment. It must be remembered that the mystic vision is perceived intermittently throughout this struggle for purgation. We can say that the perception of the vision strengthens the soul against self-love and ultimately brings illumination. The higher levels of experience coming in the wake of purgation are dealt with in the next chapter.

Generally we look upon the objects of the world, not as mere objects, but as our own. We begin claiming them and owning them ; next we think of protecting them and look upon them with

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[1] Mysticism : P. 226-227.
[2] *Ibid* : P. 227.
[3] *Ibid* : P. 229.

desire. If they are lost or destroyed we sufler for them. Thus we find that the acquisitive feeling, a sense of possession leads to all attachment and the consequent experience of pleasure and pain. Strictly speaking, the objects are in no way related to our lives. But still the experience of joy or sorrow caused by the sense of possession affects our lives and impedes the growth of the spirit within.

Māṇikkavācakar's poems bear evidences that at one time he believed that the world of material objects was real and an end in itself; but he soon realized the emptiness of material pursuits. The world of objects were purely external to him, in no way connected with the growth of the spirit within. It was the mind that is deluded to love them. He refers to the two attitudes of his mind with regard to material wealth and other possessions as follows :

I was daily thinking of the deceitful wealth, unmindful of anything else, looking upon it as an end in itself, until God chose to sway me.

'In pleasures false I plunged, and sank deep down,—
each day of earthly prosperous joy,
I thought it true, and thus enslaved I lay ;
in grace revealed, He made me His !
Call Him ' my Teacher ', ' precious Life ', ' great Lord,
of Tillai's sacred temple-court ; '
And seek those selfsame roseate flowery Feet,
TO BREATHE HIS PRAISE, THOU HUMMING-BEE ![1]

'In this mad world, ' mid stress and strife confused,
from birth and death that ceaseless spring ;—
Where hoarded treasure, women, offspring, tribe,
and learning's store, men prize and seek ;—
He calms the storm of mental changing states,
and clears from error's mists the soul. '[2]

God is said to have infused a new life, a spiritually oriented life, by enabling his mind to get rid of attachments. The mind

[1] The Humming Bee ; 17. P. 150.
[2] *Ibid* ; 6. P. 145.

that was so long thinking of material possession was now inclined towards God, and this too happens only by His will. This new awakening of the self is a spiritual rebirth caused only by the will of God—the Master.

In the second verse, quoted above, the poet criticises the possessive nature of the mind, which is attached not only to material wealth, but also to close kith and kin, learning, family, etc. It cannot be said that it is bad or evil to be attached to the near and dear ones, or to higher learning. However good they be, the attachments are definitely worldly. They are good as for as they go. But we give so much importance to these attachments as to become mad after them. They are capable of diverting the attention of the mystics who long for spiritual communion.[1] Hence Māṇikkavācakar's reproach of domestic attachments. The mind should be corrected to give up its desire for these attachments and love God.

In two poems[2] he reveals overflowing agony for the worldly attachment ; in another poem[3] we see the poet's tremendous relief from these agoinising reflections. This relief is effected only by the experience of the mystic vision and detachment of Ñāṉa.

Thus periods of conflict and detachment occur alternately in the life of the poet-saint. Afterwards, the senses too undergo a change into something rich and strange. They become steady. They are disciplined. All these seem to have taken place at Tirupperunturai itself, where the poet had his first mystic experience.

The two decads, 'Sacred Sadness' and 'The Miracle Decad' show the extent of the mind's purification attained after passing through a period of violent agitation.

The first song in 'Sacred Sadness' refers to this change of the mind. 'I was iron-willed'—so you let me go my way but dragged me back again and again towards you ; filled my heart with overflowing love and revealed Thy feet to me. All this you did to change my mind', sings the saint.

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[1] Mysticism : P. 223.
[2] The Refuge Decad and The Desire Dead.
[3] The Wonder Decad.

'My iron mind full often didst Thou draw, and
melt my frame;
Thy feet to me didst show, as though the
sweet cane's pleasantness;
. . . .
The jackals all Thou mad'st great horses;
thus didst show Thy grace.'[1]

This song addressed to God shows how Maṇikkavācakar's mind was continuously purged by reflections of the world. The ceaseless conflict of the mind is interspersed with the vision of God now and then. There must have been a mystic experience of Divine vision which impelled him to sing this poem. In the song quoted above, the term 'jackals' symbolically stands for the physical senses which drift away uncontrollably. So they are reproachfully termed 'jackals'. They are said to turn into horses i.e. they do not appear again as 'jackals' after the vision is gone; but they undergo a fundamental change in their very nature. This is what is meant by the metamorphosis of jackals into horses.[2] This is a metaphor, corroborated by Tirunāvukkaracar.[3] Tirumūlar also points out that the vision of God brings about a glorious metamorphosis of senses.[4]

Once this change occurred, the poet felt that he had been redeemed for all time. There are many lyrics in 'The Sacred Sadness' and 'The Miracle Decad' which testify to this change in his reflections. The poet speaks of God having freed him by revealing His Holy Feet.[5] The term 'freed' indicates his conviction about the purification of the mind. God, he says, gave him true wisdom which made him realise the hollowness of earthly life.[6] In the decad 'The Sacred Tōṇōkkam' he refers to this inner freedom he gained at the perception of the divine vision. When the ineffable Absolute communed with his spirit, appearing like a

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[1] Sacred Sadness: 1. P. 298.

[2] This incident of 'changing jackals into horses' has been taken literally by the authors of traditional Puranic literature.

[3] He who changes the jackals into horses (Tēvāram, Tiruppaṇantā ed; P. 282).

[4] Tirumantiram: 140.

[5] The Miracle Decad: 5. P. 311.

[6] *Ibid*: 10. P. 313.

flame, he is said to have crossed the limitless sea of desire and therefore, the senses have flown away like birds that cannot find food.[1]

In the Poem, ' Mine eyes have seen ' he says that God corrected his mind that would have become corrupted.

' In senses ' power, sure cause of death,
 I erewhile ' wildered lay,—
Oft wrapt through realms of boundless space,
 then plunged in dismal hells !
He gave perception clear, made me all bliss,—
 made me His own !
I'VE TILLAI SEEN that holds the Gem, which
 endless rapture yields ! '[2]

Mortification :

Underhill writes :

' By Mortification is to be understood the positive aspect of purification : the remaking in relation to reality of the permanent elements of character....... The object of mortification is to kill that old self, break up his egoistic attachments and cravings, in order that the higher centre, the " new man " may live and breathe,.....a house divided against itself cannot stand..... The death of self-hood in its narrow individualistic sense is the primary object of mortification. All the twisted elements of character which foster the existence of this unreal yet complex creature are to be pruned away. Then, as with the trees of the forest, so with the spirit of man, strong new branches will spring into being, grow towards air and light. " I live, yet not I " is to be the declaration of the mystic who was endured this bodily death '.[3]

At this stage of purgation, both mind and the self of the mystic grow corresponding to the Realisation of the Absolute. Mystics rebel against egoism, and narrow self-love, that rouses the sense of possession. It becomes their duty to get rid of this ego. The

[1] The Sacred Tōṇōkkam : 14. P. 189.
[2] Mine eyes have seen : 1. P. 264.
[3] Mysticism : P. 216-217 & 221.

mind is prohibited from attaching itself to external objects as much as to internal ego. The illusion of identifying oneself with one's body is ended. Therefore, the mystic suffers physically, in fact he inflicts pain on his body by drawing nails on his limbs, by pricking himself with thorns, etc. This is one way of treating the body indifferently. The mystic wants to remain unconcerned about the body. Hence the various methods of mortification, of self-inflicted pain by the mystics. Mortification also consists merely of indifference to body and this is true of Māṇikkavācakar. In moments of despondency, he cries out, that

> ' My Chief, who gave me grace sweeter than mother's
> love, I see not now !
> Yet in the fire I fall not, wander not o'er hills,
> nor plunge me in the sea ! '[1]

As far as the evidences in Tiruvāacakam go, it can be said that the poet-saint got rid of self-love by condemning the body, praying to God for abolishing attachments and by the repeated mystic experience of the vision of God. The poet experiences acute mental agony caused by his inner conflict. This mental suffering and true wisdom or Ñāṉa attained by the mystic vision of God enable him to get rid of his ego, not so much by inflicting physical pain or mortification. It is no doubt true that he chastises the body. There are many verses in the ' Desire Decad '[2] which speak of his attainment of true wisdom and his realisation that the body is not the self. The self is not the physical frame ; his true self is pure Reason or Wisdom incarnate. It is Light ; before appearing in this body, before being born in this world, he was bound to His Feet in a state of pure ignorance ; now when he was embodied, he attained knowledge and realised Him in the mystic vision. He felt that he could even remain in the same state of true wisdom.

> ' Erewhile, that I no more might ' bide with Him,
> He sent, and plac'd me in this cell.
> He look'd on me, spake gentlest words of mystery ;
> break off the yoke ; His hand

[1] The Sacred Cento : 39. P. 61.
[2] The Desire Decad : 2, 3, 4, 5 & 9. P. 235, 236 & 238.

Upraised, made former falseness cease, removed
all fault, filled me with gleaming light :
' TWAS THUS HE MADE ME HIS, AND JOIN'D ME TO HIS
SAINTS : SUCH WONDER HAVE WE SEEN ! '[1]

Self-love expresses itself in various ways. It leads to self-praise. It leads to a powerful sense of ego. Self prides of all action willed by itself. We have shown that self ought to detach itself from the body. It should die in the body. But even this is not enough to lead to a complete freedom of the mind. Self should free itself from all thoughts of ego ; i.e. from any such consciousness as 'I do everything ', ' I act', etc. It should detach itself from ego. Only then and not untill then, spiritual progress is possible. It is appropriate to refer to Thomas A. Kempis's words here. ' Who hinders thee more, than the unmortified affections of thy own heart ? . . . . if we were perfectly dead unto ourselves, and not entangled within our own breasts, then should we be able to taste divine things, and to have come experience of heavenly contemplation. '[2]

Mortification then means also ' death unto oneself '—or ' death of the ego '. But Underhill says ' nevertheless, in spite of its etymological associations, the object of mortification is not death but life ! ' She quotes from Tauler's Sermon in this connection : " In the truest death of all created things, the sweetest and most natural life is hidden '.[3]

According to her, the factors of purgation are as follows :—

1. Dying unto self.
2. Nullifying the consciousness that self is taking sides with good in this conflict with evil, and that it follows the upright path.

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[1] The Wonder Decad : 8. P. 241.
[2] Imitation of Christ. Chap. III & IX.
[3] Mysticism : P. 217.

Here it may be noted that Shelley was thinking of this juxtoposition of death and birth when he eulogised the west wind as ' Thou Destroyer and Preserver '—

Shelly ; Ode to the West Wind. I Stanza.

When mystics experience these two aspects of purgation, there is an end of all methods of mortification says Underhill.[1] These are fully illustrated in the life of Māṇikkavācakar.

1. *Dying unto self*:

Ever since Māṇikkavācakar had the mystic vision of God at Peruntuṟai, he was drawn towards this concept and longed for 'dying unto self'. There is a poem where he asks simply 'When comes death'[2] This is more than mere dying in the body. In fact he thought of 'this death' even before his mind was freed from attachments to external objects. Such was his love of God, that he wanted ego to die—a metaphorical death where one appears as good as a corpse unto the world whilst being born in God.

As has been already explained, the poet rooted out the apprhensions in his mind regarding worldly attachments after a long and continued struggle; the mystic vision came often and filled his mind with a fervid longing and pangs of separation in its absence. The love of God grew limitless, purging off all external attachments of self-love. It grew into divine bliss, a big flame, as it were capable of burning out all thoughts and feelings of ego.

This truth can be understood from the poet's prayerful lamentations to God, at this mental stage. The pangs of separation, which served as a means to attain detachment grew more and more severe, consquent to the frequent mystic visions and their appearance, thereby accelerating the process of purgation. Hence his supplications to God are filled with the pangs of separation.

There are some remarkable verses in this decad and elsewhere in Tiruvācakam, dealing with this theme i.e. dying unto self.

'Like one who loses his possession even when wide wake, I have lost sight of Thy Holy Feet! Though separated from you thus, I don't die yet! What a pity'![3]

When you came to me as a vision, I was delighted; I was blissful. Even now I continue to have this consciousness of bliss which

[1] Mysticism: P. 220.
[2] The Sacred Cento: 3. P. 45.
[3] Weariness of Life: 1. P. 225.

means that I have not yet got rid of this consicousness of 'self'—which enjoys everything. So bid me die unto my self.[1]

I cannot realise God's Grace by means of my intellect or soul's perception. I do not know the way that leads to it. My intellect is so much limited. As long as I live, this reasoning power is bound to live. So I cannot bear this bodily existence.[2]

I thought I had known you by means of my intellectual reasoning; I was happy about it. But now I realise the vanity of all knowledge and I am full of grief; nor do I know the means to immerse unto the sea of Thy grace![3]

O! Lord, you offer me the Ambrosia of Thy grace! I try to swallow it, but it sticks at my throat and causes a hiccup caused by the consciousness of self or ego. Give me water to wash off this self-love first, which hinders me from enjoying your Divine bliss.[4]

These songs reveal the poet's painful awareness of his own 'ego' which is an impediment to his perennial enjoyment of divine bliss. He also mourned that he was unable to realise God by his soul's perception. This is very well borne out by one of the above stanzas.[5]

Only if God wills, the soul can perceive Him. The soul cannot identify Him by visualizing concepts such as a definite Form, colour, character, etc. He is transcendent and His revelation in time and in space is only by His will.

The sense of ego bars the love of God. The 'ego' is an individualistic sense, which makes the self as a separate entity. The Absolute is a supreme force—(the dazzling Flame) that makes itself felt everywhere. If one is to experience God-love, the feeling that one's self is distinct should disappear. This false feeling of separation is the basis of all attachments. It is necessary to get rid of the mind's attachments to objects by keeping it detached

[1] *Ibid*: 3. P. 226.
[2] *Ibid*: 6. P. 228.
[3] *Ibid*: 10. P. 230.
[4] The Refuge-Decad: 10. P. 234.
[5] Weariness of Life: 10. P. 230.

or distinct from them. But the reasoning, ' My self is distinct, therefore I am distinct '—is a terrible obstacle to God-realization. The lines quoted earlier, translated by Pope, have to be re-examined in this context. ' Eager I took Ambrosia of thy Grace so freely pour'd. I strove to drink : my sinful soul by evil fate was bound '. ' God's Grace in abundance is pervading everywhere in the universe. I, as a separate entity, tried to drink of God's Grace—as if it was meant only for me ''.

The phrase, ' viḷuṅkiṉēṉ ' literally meaning, ' trying to swallow everything, sweeping in full ' indicates a feeling of this ' self ' being distinct. Whereas the expression ' Ambrosia of thy grace so freely poured ' indicates the universality of Divine grace, the phrase ' eager I took ', contradicts this universality. Hence the experience of Bliss is hindered. He illustrates that experience picturesquely as ' vikkiṉēṉ '. (It stuck to my throat). The individual soul tries to monopolise for itself, what belongs to all. This acquisitive feeling, even with reference to experience of God's grace, reflects the powerful ego. This self-hood should die to lead to the soul's perfection. The individualistic sense or the powerful self-hood, makes him ' hiccup ' when he tries to ' swallow ' greedily all the Grace of God copiously poured everywhere. This sense of self-hood, or of conceiving the self as a separate entity will have to cease. Only then he will feel one with God. We are reminded here of Underhill again, who says, ' The death of self-hood, in its narrow individualistic sense is the primary object of mortification '.[1] Tāyumāṉavar, another great mystic poet sings that ' the bliss of Civa fills all space and overflows like a flood, integrating all into ONE whole '. He exhorts all to shed off their assertive self-hood and to gather together, to enjoy the Bliss of God in full.[2]

Thus we infer from all the illustrations cited above that the sense of ego or self-hood is an obstruction in the way of God-realization.

Another point to be noted in the above decad is that the poet prays at once for relieving his mind from external and internal attachments. It is not as though the latter follows the former.

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[1] Mysticism : P. 221.
[2] Ṭāyumāṉavar Pāṭal—Tiruppaṉantāl. Ed. P. 146.

The process of purgation takes place at various levels, all at the same time. We who examine this experience critically, might dissect it, compartmentalize it and examine the various strands one by one. Attachments of external objects and attachment to one self are both inter-twined. But the axis of each external attachment is this 'self-hood'. So until this 'self-hood', this sense of distinction, is eradicated, the external attachments do survive in one form or the other. Therefore, it should be remembered that the poet-saint sings of both attachments in the same decad, though we deal with them separately, for purposes of analysis and research.

Next, after the death of self-hood, a new life springs of its own. This state of bliss is now examined here.

Māṇikkavācakar longed for complete identification with Civam : 'Let others speak of me as a lunatic, but let me feel one with Thee'.

'Transcendent Good ! Owner and Sire ! Thy servant
melting thinks on Thee ;
In raptures meet I utter forth my fever'd soul's
ecstatic joys,
Still wandering from town to town ; while men cry
out, " A madman this ; "
And each one speaks, with mind distraught,
discordant words. O, when comes death ?'[1]

He attained this oneness as it is evident from the 'Wonder Decad':

'Perpend the one sole cause for which the world
a madman nameth me :
I liv'd as others, knew no way to join me to
His grace divine ;
To deaths, to fallings into direful hells. I
gave myself a prey.
THE FATHER MADE ME HIS, AND JOIN'D ME TO HIS
SAINTS : SUCH WONDER HAVE WE SEEN !'[2]

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[1] The Sacred Cento : 3. P. 45.
[2] The Wonder-Decad : 4. P. 240.

He says that he wanted to die not knowing the means of attaining God experience. But God showered His grace on him, swayed him as his master and joined him with his own disciples. Therefore, people call him a mad fellow.

This verse is a direct, almost word for word answer to the song quoted from the Sacred Cento earlier.[1] The death of 'selfhood' is mentioned as 'Ottuccel'—'to to in harmony'—in both the verses. In other words, the discordant thought of separating oneself from Civa is lost, the sense of duality is gone and a sense of oneness is attained. This is what is meant by identifying with God. Such persons who have reached this stage are not concerned with the routine of life or worldly formalities. Therefore, they look mad or antique in their disposition and behaviour. But the mystics are not bothered about the reaction of the people to their state of harmony. Thus when Māṇikkavācakar went to Tillai later he sang, 'The people around me laugh at me and call me a lunatic'—but I am unaffected by their words of mockery, nor is my mind bitter about it at all'.[2]

'Taking reproaches like an ornament to wear, I lose all sense of a separate entity, with a fervid sense of Ñāṉa, overflowing with love for all'.[3] These words reveal that 'death unto self' results from excess of pure love.

Māṇikkavācakar experienced first this overwhelming flood of pure love, when he perceived the mystic vision of God at Tirupperunturai. This love that sprang during the conversion or sublimation of the soul grew more and more intense during the middle period of the purgative process marked by the triangular phase of his life, viz. the pangs of separation, inner struggle and perception of vision. Next, with the mellowing of love, comes the stage of 'dying unto the self', when this pure flame of love burns up all attachments. Such is the flame of purifying love, springing from 'the divine furnace' that the sense of ego or self-love with its dual aspects of physical attachments and self-will is burnt down to ashes.

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[1] The Sacred Cento : 3. P. 45.
[2] Praise : Lines 68-72. P. 34.
[3] *Ibid* ;

The real nature of this divine love is illustrated in the Poem, 'Mystic Union'.

We understand from this Decad that self-love, like attachment to objects disappears during the time of the perception of God and comes back again when the vision is no longer perceived. However, the pure love that sprang at the time never fades away. 'The Decad of Mystic Union' expresses this pure love. Here he described how he enjoyed the supreme bliss of communion and how he longs to have it again. We shall study the nature of this communion in the chapter, 'The Unitive Life'. Here we are concerned only with the theme of 'dying unto self'.

How does this love cause 'dying unto the self'? It is by complete surrender to God that this 'death' is achieved. Underhill explains the surrender of the self to God thus. 'This divine furnace of purifying love demands from the ardent soul a complete self-surrender, and voluntary turning from all impurity, a humility of the most far-reaching kind'.[1] If one has cultivated this feeling of self-surrender, one will not even pray for any particular boons to God.**

Māṇikkavācakar attained such a perfect stage of spiritual purification, that he felt complete detachment. Such was his utter humility, that he wanted nothing for himself from God. He did not even want to ask God for the liberation of this body and attain the Bliss of His Holy Feet. This 'humility of the most far-reaching kind, (this dying unto one's self) is expressed by the poet-saint in two verses in 'The Bruised Heart'.

'You know what is good to ask for, even though if one prays, not knowing this, you will grant his request in full. You have made me your slave. Hereafter I have no desire or volition of my own. My knowledge is nothing but for your own gift of grace. Therefore whatever appears to be a wish of mine, or longing of mine, it is all but your will-not mine'.[2]

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[1] Mysticism : P. 221.

** Self-surrender is termed as 'Prapatti' or 'Caraṇākati' by Vaisnavites and as 'Ātma-nivētaṇam' by Saivites.

[2] The Bruised Heart : 6. P. 275.

This song indicates that the very self with all its entity of intellect, feeling, emotion or consciousness is completely surrendered to God.

Here is another song where this 'dying unto self', and negation of a sense of want are revealed.

'O ! Lord, I have seen thee and enjoyed Thy glory. I am always lost in this experience and I can only revel in its recollection. But how can I aspire to leave this body and reach the Bliss of Thy Feet ? If I aspire likewise, then will I ever be called a slave of yours at all ?

'Thou in Whose brow a central eye doth gleam ! Thy
feet-the twain-I saw ; mine eyes rejoic'd ; now,
night and day,
Without a thought, on them alone I ponder still !
How I may quit this earthly frame, how I may come
To enter 'neath Thy feet in bliss, I ponder not !
Save Thee, O King, should I Thy servant ponder aught ?
Thy service here hath fulness of delight for me !'[1]

Here is expression of the tragic ambivalence of all experience. He longed for giving up the body, to put an end to all attachments. But now, when self-love is eradicated, he disowns even this longing or prayer. He does not wish for anything nor does he pray for anything.

2. *Nullifying the consiousness that self is taking sides with good in this conflict with evil, and that it follows the upright path* :

This sense of 'dying unto the self' blooms into correlative action in the next stage of the purgation of the soul. This is nothing but acting in tune with God's will. The feeling to act 'according to God's will' is not strictly a feeling, but an attitude a transcendental consciousness. It is a consciousness that makes one a passive instrument, not an active agent. At this stage, the mystic is acted on ; he does not act. He is not even conscious of the fact that he wars with the ill and follows the right and good. This is also one aspect of dying unto the self.

[1] *Ibid* ; 9. P. 276.

Normally, the mind freed from attachments or self-love inclines towards good. It impels the mystic to love and do good. But at the stage mentioned above, the mystic's mind does not even think of good being put against evil. The mind does not fill itself with desire for virtue. It is balanced, denying virtue as well as vice. It is not indignant towards evil, nor does it want to establish good. This stage, when good or evil is neither liked nor hated, reflects a poised mind.** Underhill speaks of this poise and balance as follows :

'The Franco-Flemish mystic who wrote, and the English contemplative who translated, " The Mirror of Simple Souls ",[1] have between them described and explained in bold and accurate language, the conditions under which the soul is enabled to abandon that " hard service of the virtues " which has absorbed it during the Purgative way. The statement of the " French Book " is direct and uncompromising : well calculated to startle timid piety. " Virtues, I take leave of you for ever more " exclaims the soul. " Now shall mine heart be more free and more in peace than it hath been before. I wot well your service is too travaillous . . . some time I laid mine heart in you without any dissevering : Ye wot well this : I was in all things to you obedient. O, I was then your servant, but now I am delivered out of your thraldom '.

To this astounding utterance the English translator has added a singularly illuminating gloss. 'I am stirred here to say more to the matter, as thus : First : when a soul giveth her to perfection, she laboureth busily day and night to get virtues, by counsel of reason, and striveth with vices at every thought, at every word and deed that she perceiveth cometh of them, and busily searcheth vices, them to destroy. Thus the virtues be mistresses, and every virtue maketh her to was with its contrary, the which be vices. Many sharp pains and bitterness of conscience feeleth the soul in this war . . . But so long one may bite on the bitter bark of the nut, that at last he shall come to the sweet kernel. Right so, ghostly to understand, it fareth by these souls that be come to peace. They have so long striven with vices and wrought by virtues, that they

** This reminds us of 'Malaparipākam' and 'Sattinipātam' of the Saiva Siddhānta Philosophy.

[1] 'The Mirror of Simple Souls'—Ed. by Clare Kirch Berger. P. 12.

become to the nut kernel, that is, to the love of God, which is sweetness. And when the soul has deeply tasted this love, so that this love of God worketh and hath his usages in her soul, then the soul is wondrous light and gladsome. . . . . Then is she mistress and lady over the virtues, for she hath them all within herself . . . And then this soul taketh leave of virtues, as of the thraldom and painful travail of them that she had before, and now she is lady and sovereign, and they be subjects. '[1]

Māṇikkavācakar got rid of the consciousness of virtue and vice in this sense. He could act with absolute impartiality of spirit neither loving virtue nor hating vice. Moreover, he looked upon himself only as an instrument and God acts through him. This is a higher stage of divine consciousness, when he saw God in everything and everything in God. This consciousness is the same that the Upaniṣads speak of—' īsāvāsyam idam sarvam' etc.—Īsōpaniṣad : Not that he remained inactive ; he did many generous philanthropic deeds.

' My every power He fills with bliss superne
  makes all life's works
Devotion true . . . . '[2]

But he did not feel that he was the agent of all the actions but God did them through him. Even an evil deed perpetrated by him is God's own. He says : ' Oh ! Lord, you own me all, body and soul. I have no feeling of any hurdles. You are the master ; through me you can do good or evil. You alone are the doer."

' That very day my soul, my body, all to me
  pertaining, didst Thou not take as Thine own,
Thou like a mountain strong ! when me Thou mad'st
  Thy slave ?
  And this day is there any hindrance found in me ?
Our Mighty One ! Eight-arm'd and Triple-eyed !
  Do Thou to me what's good alone, or do Thou ill,
To all resigned, I'm Thine and wholly Thine ! '[3]

In another stanza he asks'— do I have any power at all ? '[4]

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[1] As quoted and commented by Underhill in her book, Mysticism. P. 218, 219.
[2] The Tōṇōkkam : 6. P. 185.
[3] The Bruised Heart : 7. P. 275-276.
[4] The Bruised Heart : 8. P. 276.

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Besides attaining this consciousness of action, he realised the Reality of God-consciousness flooding everywhere. The sense of this Omni-presence of divinity made him overcome the sense of distinction between good and bad. Besides, a sense of oneness came, when he saw God in both good and evil. 'Thyself the whole of ill and well'—he sings.[1] This synthesis of good and evil is a very important stage in the process of purgation.[2]

The decads entitled 'Mystic Union' and 'The Bruised Heart' both composed at Tirup-peruntuṟai contain some more evidences to testify this development of purgative way. Though we examine the various stages of purgation one by one, Māṇikkavācakar had experienced them all, more or less together even while he was at Tirup-peruntu ai, where he had the first mystic vision of the Absolute. Even there, his self-hood or ego had ceased; his mind had been filled with abundant love; his self-surrender had been complete and his determination to cling to God as the only Reality had been formed. The chapter on his experience called, 'The Dark Night of the Soul' will further deal with this.

So far we have seen how the poet-saint's soul progressed towards purgation and complete purification, freeing itself from attachments to objects and attachment to self. We have looked into the concomitant conflict and inner struggle. The attachment to objects and to self, their depth and force and the extraordinary difficulty in overcoming them, make the poet-saint call them 'an

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[1] *Ibid*: 5. P. 275.

[2] This reminds us of 'Iru-viṉai oppu' of the Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy. Blake, the great mystic poet of England, was assailed by doubts regarding the contrary nature of the duality of good and evil. But he thinks that this conflict is resolved only in the 'New Jerusalem'—in the new worlds to be inherited—not in the mind of man as such.

'When wolves and tigers howl for prey,
They pitying stand and weep;
Seeking to drive their thirst away,
And keep them from the sheep.
But if they rush dreadful,
The angels, most headful,
Receive each mild spirit,
New worlds to inherit.'—'Night'—Peacock's English Verse
Vol. III. P. 477.

Endless Illusion '.[1] It is this painful awareness of the overpowering nature of the attachments that makes him lament again and again. He says that he, like a dirty animal, was lost, wallowing in the quagmire of ignorance till he was blessed with mystic vision at Perunturai. The Lord is said to have dragged him from the quagmire of ignorance (or illusion)—aññāṉa—and blessed him with endless bliss. Moreover, the poet during his pilgrimage to many holy places like Tiruvārūr, Tiruvannāmalai, Tirukaḷukuṉram and Tiru Tillai, composed many songs which are remarkable, reflecting, as they do, his spiritual pilgrimage towards 'Illumination' and 'Unitive Life'. As we have shown in detail, every stage of purgation of the self, results from perception and the influence of the mystic vision and the consequent illumination. We shall now proceed to make a detailed study of this perfection, or inner growth of the soul in the next chapter called "The Illuminative Way".

[1] Mine eyes have seen : 8. P. 267.

5. THE ILLUMINATIVE WAY

It has been seen already how the mystics with their awakened self try hard to live true to the Absolute by rigorous purification or purgation ; how they struggle inwardly in their efforts to renounce all attachments and attain Illumination ; and how the periods of Illumination and attachments alternate each other. The progressive march of the poet's soul towards complete illumination, coming in the wake of the mystic experience, has to be next considered.

The mystic vision and the attainment of true wisdom or Ñāṉa by the mystics are styled together as the Illuminative Way by the western and the eastern mystics who deal with this subject of mysticism.[1]

The mystics perceive God as light—the light that dispels the darkness or ignorance. Therefore, they like to perceive this Light again and again and explore all the possibilities of perceiving this vision for ever.

To the mystics, the awakening of the self is only the first step to a higher consciousness. This higher consciousness is not related in any way to the ordinary states of consciousness known to all viz, waking, dreaming and sleeping. The transcendent consciousness is peculiar to mystics.

This chapter heading is also referred to as the 'Illumination' in the body of this thesis.

1. (a) 'This is the light diffused within my thought by Him'. (The Sacred Veṇpā : 7. p. 336.)
   (b) Evelyn Underhill—Mysticism. P. 233.
   (c) Saint Rāmaliṅkar : Tiru-Aruṭpā : VI Book : Arutperuñjōti Akaval—Couplet :789.

It can, therefore, be called mystic consciousness. As was discussed in the chapter 'Awakening of the self at Peruntural' this experience pertains to the soul and not to the mind. However, it was also explained that the soul's experience is reflected in the mind also and becomes the mind's experience as well and makes the distinction between the two levels of experience (soul's and the mind's) disappear.

Evelyn Underhill says that the higher consciousness (or transcendental awareness) which appears abruptly and suddenly at the time of the awakening of the self, recurs again as a result of the ceaseless efforts of the mystics to purify themselves. She says :—

'This change of sonsciousness, however abrupt and amazing it may seem to the self which experiences it, seems to the psychologist a normal phase in that organic process of development which was initiated by the awakening of the transcendental sense. Responding to the intimations received in that awakening, ordering itself in their interest, concentrating its scattered energies on this one thing, the self emerges from long and varied acts of purification to find that it is able to apprehend another order of reality. It has achieved consciousness of a world that was always there and wherein its substantial being—that ground which is of God—has always stood. Such a consciousness is 'Transcendental Feeling'[1].

It is stated that such a beholding, such a lifting of consciousness from a self-centred to a God-centred world is of the essence of illumination.[2]

There are many evidences in Tiruvācakam which refer to this transcendental consciousness that came to Māṇikkavācakar as a result of his efforts towards purgation.

In one of his verses, the poet-saint exclaims that God cannot be known by normal consciousness or perceived by physical senses. But yet he sings in the same song that God easily appeared before him.[3] This must be true because of the poet's higher consciousness, where he must have perceived God. This perception was as real as an experience in the wakeful stage.

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[1] Mysticism. P. 233.
[2] Mysticism : P. 234.
[3] The Universe : Lines 112, 113, 119. P. 25.

Māṇikkavācakar saw God as clearly and doubtlessly as we do see with our wakeful eyes. Hence his words—

'In waking hour to me a cur Thou gavest grace, '[1]

God who is unknown and unknowable is easily perceived by the poet in this state of super consciousness. So, he says :

'Beauty rare, yet easy of access, I praise ! '[2]

and

'Thee all find hard to know ; easy to us Thine own ! '[3]

The poet-saint's concept of the world and of his life underwent a marvellous change because of this super consciousness. He ralised that it is vain to be self-centred or self-willed, it is God's will that matters, because He is the axis or centre of the world.[4] This consciousness presented the world to him in a new perspective, just as objects look different from various angles.

It appears as though a new flood of light pervades everywhere, dispelling all darkness for ever. To him this world appeared as though 'apparelled in a celestial glory '.[5] A new Sun emerges and a new morn dawns. It is this thrilling, almost ecstatic enjoyment of the new experience, this renaissance of the spirit so to say, that is couched in the wonderful verses of 'The Morning Hymn '. Strictly speaking, this kind of poetry is an invocation sung in the early morning to wake up a hero (any reputed person). This is akin to the French *aubade* defined as a 'musical announcement of dawn '. The awakening indicates the end of darkness and night and the advent of light upon the earth. Māṇikkavācakar uses this kind of poetry to express the advent of his transcendental sense. His natural consciousness is shed ; the world appears in a celestial light. Profuse God-consciousness radiates through his being. The poet sings in ecstasy this new consciousness. In the

[1] Praise : Line 144, P. 38.
[2] *Ibid* : Line 126, P. 37.
[3] The Morning Hymn : 3. P. 209.
[4] *Aristotle* also thought of the world as a revolving wheel—all of us are caught in the wheel—while God is the still centre point.
The Buddha too spoke of the wheel of life.
T. S. Eliot makes excellent use of this image in his poetic drama, 'Murder in the Cathedral. '
[5] Wordsworth, 'Ode on the intimations of immortality '.

first line of 'The morning Hymn' he refers to Him as the Prime source of his life.

> 'Hail ! Being, Source to me of all life's joys ! 'Tis dawn ;
> upon The flower-like feet twin wreaths of blooms we lay, '[1]

This shows the change of concept. First his self or ego was the source, the motivation of all actions. Now God is this centre or axis. The ego is displaced by God and this realisation is represented in these lines. The end of the sense of ego is symbolically represented by the term 'Pularntatu' ('Tis dawn'). Throughout this decad the poet symbolically speaks of this super consciousness—of the experience of Illumination—in keeping with the poetic tradition of this spiritual *aubade*. This super consciousness of the poet and the illumination he gained thereby are examined below.

The poet's change of concept is seen when he refers to the world now as a means leading to self-realisation.

> ''tis earth alone where Civan̲'s grace is wont to save.' [2]

Formerly this world was a wilderness of agony. Now in this state of super consciousness, the orientation changes with God as the axis. The whole world appears as a place where he and true devotee like himself can explore the possibilities of salvation. So, the poet-saint no longer speaks of his inability to bear this earthly life. Previously he was weary of this life.

> 'Here these earthly joys I bear not, Embiran̲,—
> I all renounce !'[3]

We have to see an object to have a clear idea of it. Nothing is concrete like visual experience. So, sight is an important factor here. Similarly a consciousness is necessary to enable us to perceive Divinity and that too is not a normal consciousness but a transcendental one. It is already shown that Māṇikkavācakar had this transcendental consciousness. What exactly is the nature of the experience gained by such consciousness ? What is this object perceived ?

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[1] The Morning Hymn : 1 P. 207.
[2] *Ibid* : 10 P. 212,
[3] The Sacred Cento : 65 P. 71.

Evelyn Underhill speaks of two aspects of mystic experience :

(1) ' All pleasurable and exalted states of mystic consciousness in which the sense of I-hood persists, in which there is a loving and joyous relation between the Absolute as object and self as subject, fall under the head of Illumination.'

(2) ' To see God in nature ', to attain a radiant consciousness of the ' otherness ' of natural things, is the simplest and commonest form of illumination.[1]

In the second aspect mentioned above, there is the experience of identification with the objects of the external world. This is a process of ' Becoming ' where the distinction between the new world and the self disappears, in the glory of Divine grace. But in the first aspect of mystic experience God is the object of enjoyment and the self the subject enjoying.

In this process the mystic has a sense of enjoyment and it is this consciousness that differentiates it from the ' unitive way '** of mystic communion where all distinction ceases and where there is no longer the consciousness of distinction.

We can find the stamp of distinction in Māṇikkavācakar's experience of Illumination.

In ' The Miracle Decad ' he sings, for instance :

' He gave His sacred grace, that falseness all
my soul might flee, and showed His golden feet !
The TRUTH Himself,—He stood in presence there :[2]
THIS MATCHLESS MIRACLE I TELL NOT, I ! '

This song shows that God stood before him, that he was aware of the distinction between his ' self ' and God. The consciousness that he was experiencing the supreme bliss was also there. The thrill, the wonder he felt at that time was ineffable.

He speaks of God's Golden Feet, but does not mention about the ' unitive experience '.

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[1] Mysticism : P. 234 & 238.
[2] The Miracle Decad : 1 P. 309.
** The ' Unitive Life 'is also referred to as the ' Unitive Way '.

He realises God's omnipresence :

> ' The boundless ether, water, earth, fire, air ;—all these
> Thou art ; and none of these Thou art ; but dwell'st
> In these conceal'd, O formless one ! My heart is glad
> that with these eyes THIS DAY I've seen Thee clear ! '[1]

The poet-saint had many times this transcendental consciousness. He felt then that God is the centre of the universe and that earthly life itself may pave the way for God-realization ; he was aware of his own distinct self at such times. The sense of consciousness of self—this sense of self-hood (or I-hood as philosopher call it) is not to be confused with the self-centred ego. That was full of attachments and deluded the mind prior to the perception of the Divine Being. But this enlightened sense of self-hood is fully conscious of God who is the centre or axis of all wordly life and naturally it strives for communion through enjoyment and adoration. If the self cultivates a longing for wordly objects as an end in itself, it shows the mental disharmony. The purgative way is adopted to get rid of this disharmony and later to look upon the objects as God's manifestation and enjoy them as such. The self learns to be in harmony with the world of objects (all depending on God for existence). When there is this perception, there is no self-centred joy nor is there any hate for the objects. As God is perceived in all objects there is only consciousness of Supreme Bliss. Mystics who are thus in harmony with the world are conscious of their separate selves enjoying this bliss. But this is entirely different from the pleasures of the senses which are born of the ego and its attachments to the world of objects. Underhill calls this divine consciousness, as the ' conscious harmony with the world of Becoming '.[2]

Māṇikkavācakar attained this sense of harmony at the super conscious level.

> ' That gathering darkness may disperse,
> illusions cease, and all be clear,
> The Splendour urges on His steed.'[3]

[1] The Temple Lyric : 6. P. 222.
[2] Mysticism : P. 234.
[3] The Sacred Pāṇḍi : 6. P. 289.

'Press forward, take the gracious boon of Him
Who made the circling world !'[1]

The whole world is given as a boon—there is nothing to irritate or vex the soul here. All things permeated by God, are seen as they are without 'ego'. The mystic lives in harmony with them.

We have seen so far how Underhill's views regarding the distinctive nature of the Illuminative way are illustrated in Māṇikkavācakar's life. Next we shall examine his transcendental experience, classifying it as shown by Underhill.

1. 'A joyous apprehension of the Absolute.

2. Clarity of vision in regard to the phenomenal world—the self perceives an added significance and reality in all natural things.

3. Along with this two-fold extension of consciousness, the enormous increase in the energy of the intuitional or transcendental self.'[2]

Underhill says that one or all the three aspects of this mystic consciousness may be illustrated in the life of mystics and that one of them will be dominant.[3] It is possible to study Māṇikkavācakar's mystic experience under these three heads.

Of the three, the first two aspects deal with the self's perception of Reality in the eternal and the temporal world. They are felt simultaneously. They are dealt with one by one for purposes of analysis.

1. *Māṇikkavācakar's perception of the Absolute* :

The apprehension is two-fold ; one is the immanent aspect of the Absolute and the other is its transcendental aspect. When Māṇikkavācakar felt the first awakening of the self, he had the apprehension of the Immanence of God. This apprehension matured as a result of his efforts towards purgation, his consequent sufferings and this purification of his mind. At the same time he apprehended God as a transcendental Being as well. First, his

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[1] *Ibid* : 8 P. 290.
[2] Mysticism : P. 240-241.
[3] Mysticism : P. 240-241.

perception of Reality that is immanent—its development by gradation, is examined here.

Perception of Light :

During the period of the awakening of the self at Peruntuṛai, the vision of Flame that appeared within was reflected in the mind as well. The same mystic vision appeared again at Madurai, indicating the poet-saint's purgation. This is illustrated by the lines :

' Our King made me His slave, and in the
  path of grace to keep,
Made manifest the ancient brightening ray.[1]

The vision of Flame that appeared at Madurai, was perceived again at Peruntuṛai, as a big Light. Like all mystics, Māṇikkavācakar also had the mystic vision of the Absolute manifesting Himself as a bright dazzling Light—' jōti '. In ' The Decade of Grace ' he sings :

' When you pitied me and wanted to manifest Yourself before me, you favoured me Oh ! Father, by appearing as a bright light—as a Flame of Light '.

' The Lotus-god, the four-fac'd ; Kaṇṇaṉ too,
  dark as the azure sky, could not approach
Thee, Pure One ! when They pray'd Thee to shine forth,
  Father ! Thou wert as mighty flame display'd.
In Veda-echoing Perun-turrai Thou
  'neath the Kuruntham's flow'ry shade didst rest.
Great Being spotless ! when Thy servant craving calls,
  BID THOU IN GRACE MY FEARS BEGONE ! '[2]

It is to be inferred that it is natural for the Divine Being to manifest Himself as Light. In another song composed at Tillai, ' The Temple Lyric ', he invokes God directly as the ' Form that manifests itself as Light '.

' O Form , beheld in radiant LIGHT made manifest ;
  Thou only Mystic One, Who wear'st no form ;

[1] Civaṉ's Fame : Lines 40-41 P. 10.
[2] Grace : 4 P. 256.

Thou First ! Thou Midst ! Thou Last ! Great Sea of rapturous joy !
Thou that dost loose our being's bonds ![1]

It is interesting that almost all mystics, eastern or western, have the same vision of God, as Light.[2] To quote Underhill again—

'What is the nature of this mysterious mystic illumination ? What is the form it most usually assumes in the consciousness of the self ? The illuminatives seem to assure us that its apparently symbolic name is really descriptive ; that they do experience a kind of radiance, a flooding of the personality with new light. A new Sun rises above the horizon, and transfigures their twilit world. Over and over again they return to light-imagery in this connection. Frequently, as in their first conversion, they report an actual and overpowering consciousness of radiant light, ineffable in its splendour, as an accompaniment of their inward adjustment . . . .

'Light, rare, untellable' said Whitman.

'The flowing light of the Godhead' said Mechthild of Magdaberg . . . . 'It is an infused brightness' says St. Teresa, 'a light which knows no night ; but rather, as it is always light, nothing ever disturbs it.'[3]

The songs of 'The Morning Hymn' and 'The Decad of Wonder', show that Māṇikkavācakar was blessed with the vision of the radiant light at Tirup-perunturai. In 'The Morning Hymn', the appearance of the Light is symbolically mentioned as the emergence of the sun.

A new Sun is emerging over the horizon, gradually making a new Heaven, and a new Earth. Early in the morning the last lingering signs of darkness melt away gradually. The light spreads everywhere though the source of light is yet to be seen. The Sun is yet to rise.

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[1] The Temple Lyric : 9 P. 223.

[2] cf. Milton's Invocation to Light. Paradise Lost Book III—Lines 1-7.
Hail, holy Light, offspring of Heaven first born!
. . . . .since God is light,
And never but in unapproached light
Dwelt from eternity—etc.

[3] Mysticism. P. 249.

'The sun has neared the eastern bound ; darkness departs ;
dawn broadens out ; and, like that sun, the tenderness

Of Thy blest face's flower uprising shines ; and so,
while bourgeons forth the fragrant flower of Thine eyes' beam,

Round the King's dwelling fair hum myriad swarms of bees.
See, Civa-Lord, in Perun-turrai's hallowed shrine Who dwell'st !

Mountain of bliss, treasures of grace Who com'st to yield !
O surging Sea ! FROM OFF THY COUCH IN GRACE ARISE !'[1]

This song expresses the poet's invocation to God Himself. He appeals to the Divine Light to emerge ! This is the spiritual aubade. The prayer for the emergence of Light is three-fold.

1. Prayer for vision of the Holy Feet.[2]
2. Prayer for vision of a personal form.
3. Prayer for 'dharṣan' or appearance along with Shakti—the Divine consort—to shower divine grace upon him.

All these prayers, it is learnt, were fulfilled even at Tirupperuntuṟai.

The vision of the Holy Feet and the Personnal God:

'. . . . . . . He came to save,
and showed to me His golden jewell'd feet ![3]
As KING in presence manifest He stood :'

'O Being,—Who didst show to me Thy flowery feet ;'[4]
'. . . . He on a charger rides, and thrills my soul
In Warrior-guise ! no other form beside my inmost soul doth know !'[5]

'A Pāṇḍi-king, He mounts His steed, to make all earth
the gladness share.

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[1] The Morning Hymn : 2 P. 208.
[2] *Ibid* : 3 P. 208.
[3] The Miracle—Decad : 2 P. 309.
[4] The Decad of the Tenacious Grasp : 7 P. 295.
[5] The Sacred Pāndi : 1 P. 288.

He takes the form of flood of joy unique, and holds
His servants' hearts.'[1]

The Lord manifesting Himself with Shakti, the Divine consort :

' With Her, Whose flowery locks breathe sweet perfume,
in mercy manifest, He came ; '[2]

It is worth making a deep study of the songs above, since they reflect the growth of the mystic's mind.

The first two songs pray for a recurrence of the bliss enjoyed during the period of the awakening of the soul. It has been already mentioned that at that time there was first the vision of the Holy Feet, which mellowed into the Divine Light which, in turn, consummated into Civa.

The poet sings ' The Morning Hymn ' praying for a vision of the personal God. He says accordingly :

" This is His sacred form ; this is Himself : " that we
may say and know,'[3]

thereby referring to the awakening of the soul at Tirup-peruntuṟai. Again he longs for it and prays to the Lord,

' In Uttara-kōca-maṅgai's sweet perfumed groves
Thou dwell'st ! O King of Perun-turrai's hallowed shrine !
What service Thou demandest, Lo ! we willing pay.
Our mighty Lord ! FROM OFF THY COUCH IN
GRACE ARISE ! '[4]

Moreover, the same Divinity which manifested itself as the Holy Feet, Light and Civa, appeared in the world without, in the form of the Guru or the Divine Preceptor. Therefore, it may be said that he longs to see the Divine form of the Preceptor once again.

But then, he refers to the Form of Personal God manifesting not as Guru, but as king, or as the warrior on horse back. There is no

[1] *Ibid* : 3 P. 288.
[2] The Humming Bee : 14 P. 148.
[3] The Morning Hymn : 7 P. 210.
[4] The Morning Hymn : 7 P. 211.

discrepancy here. We can say that at the beginning the poet-saint had the mystic vision of Guru or Preceptor. But soon, as his mind matured and as he learnt to look upon God as the centre of the universe, it is but natural that He chose to appear as the King, holding sovereign sway, the King of Mercy and Grace. It may be noted that Māṇikkavācakar's time was an age when the king was looked upon as a representative of God. Namāḷvār sings that whenever the love-lorn maid sights the king she exclaims that she beheld her Lord Tirumāl. In this way, the popular belief, something like the Dēvarājā cult of the Eastern seas, is utilized by Māṇikkavācakar to bring out mystic truth. Hailing from the Pandiya country he speaks of the Lord as the Pandiya king or warrior.

We can also take the term *Pari* (steed) as a symbolic usage to represent the senses and their sway. This has been mentioned in the previous chapter. Thus interpreted, 'Pari' would mean the poet's sublimated senses and the king on horse back is the Lord who controlled the senses exercising supreme authority over him and bringing about this spiritual conversion or sublimation.

In Tillai also, the poet-saint gives expression to the same feeling.

'With changing wiles the senses five bewilder me :
their course Thou dost close up, Ambrosial Fount !
Come, Light Superne, that ever springing fill'st my soul !'[1]

Here the term Light Superne (Parañjōti) means transcendental consciousness of the radiant light which came to the poet when he had completely controlled the five senses. We can say that even the figure of 'the warrior on horse back' was a symbol of an inner, mystic vision—perceived by the mind after purgation.[2]

In the Miracle Decad the poet again refers to the Symbolic vision of the Absolute appearing as king in his transcendental consciousness :

'I gave no fitting gift with lavish hand
of full-blown flowers ; nor bowed with rev'rence meet.

[1] The Temple Lyric : 1 P. 219.

[2] Synchronising with this experience in this inner space there seemed to be an event in the world without, according to the Puranic tradition.

He grace conferr'd, lest I should tread the paths
of grief, with mind bewildered by soft dames

with fragrant bosoms fair. He came to save,
and showed to me His golden jewell'd feet !

AS KING in presence manifest He stood :
THIS MATCHLESS MIRACLE I TELL NOT, I !'[1]

Here the poet uses the term, 'veḷi'. It does not mean 'outside'. It may be taken to mean simply 'space'—vast and limitless, as it is realised in a state of super consciousness during the mystic experience. It may be the soul's interior or inward vision. This inner world is called 'veḷi' by Saint Rāmaliṅkar also.[2] There is space external in the world of phenomena ; similarly there is space herein the spiritual world.

As a devotee Māṇikkavācakar prays for a vision of God on horseback. He had it ; the vision is inward, in tune with his maturity of mind. Similarly his prayer that He should appear with His divine Shakti and His doing so can be taken to indicate the ripening of the soul.

If God on horseback can be taken as a mystic symbolic vision, inwardly realised, then what is the feeling that causes the symbolization of God with His Consort, Shakti ?

Māṇnikkavācakar's concept of the world changed as a result of the transcendental consciousness. In the lines,

'" tis earth alone where Civaṉ's grace is wont to save "'[3]

he says that life in this world is taken as a means for attaining His Grace. It is this feeling that must have gained depth and intensity and led to the concept of God and His consort.

Let us now examine in detail the bliss he enjoyed through this realisation.

The first two aspects of the three-fold Illuminative Way as classified by Underhill, synchronise into a simultaneous experience

[1] The Miracle Decad : 2 P. 308.
[2] Tiru-aruṭpā : VI Book Arutpernjoti Akaval, Line 277.
[3] The Morning Hymn : 10 P. 212.

so far as Māṇikkavācakar is concerned. In other words, his apprehension of Reality in the eternal and temporal worlds is of the same period. The two worlds meet and converge. There is eternity in consciousness. Māṇikkavācakar sings of this consciousness, just as Thompson sings of the Lord in His ' Hound of Heaven '.

' The Gracious-One Who left the heavens, enter'd this earth,
made men His own ;

The Only-One, despised the flesh, entered my soul, and
fills my thought ;—

The Bridegroom of the Fawn-eyed-one that gentle rules,— '[1]

The same view i.e. apprehending God along with His consort Shakti is expressed by Tiruñāṉa Campantar, Tirunāvukkaracar and Cuntarar and other mystics.[2] Let us now examine this view in some detail.

Prior to purgation, 'the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world '[3] oppressd the poet's mind. Later, when he was blessed with the transcendental sense by the Grace of God, the world appeared to him as a divine manifestation. He became aware that this world, the physical phenomenon, is infused with a certain activating energy that is divine. This energy is the attribute assumed by God. Since there was no distinction between the attribute and the one who has the attribute, the poet perceived God in all the natural phehomena infused with His attribute. This 'something far more deeply interfused '[4] with the objects of the world, is usually unseen but it manifests itself to the poet-saint in a recognizable form. Thus the world itself becomes a divine manifestation. Hence he sings :

' Yield of the world girt by the extended sea,'[5]

[1] The Kuyil Decad : 4 P. 199.

[2] (a) Nāna Campantar Tevāram—II Book—Piramapuram—Cikāmaram —Verse No. 6.
(b) Navùkkaracar Tevaram—V Book—Tirupkkuruntokai : Verse 1.
(c) Cuntarar Tevāram : Tirukkaḷippālai : Verse 2.

[3] Wordsworth—Tintern Abbey lines—39, 40.

[4] *Ibid.*, Tintern Abbey line—96.

[5] Praise : Line 125, P. 37.

'. . . . . the sevenfold world
Whose essence is ; Ruler of souls ; SING we ! AMMĀṈĀY, SEE !'[1]

Thus God is at once the activating energy and the objects infused with the activating energy. Besides, the poet realized the transcendental aspect of Reality as well. Hence he hails God as the ONE transcending all things :

' Thou dost transcend all forms that pass and come renewed, '[2]

Therefore, God only wills to assume the attribute in space and time. It is not as though the poet repeats what others say of God. These words were born of self-realization. He realized the truth by himself. This is evident from a verse in ' The Humming Bee ' sung at Tillai :

' Unique it sprang, rose up, sent forth its boughs
that none can count,—a tree of grace !

Right well He cared for me,—a cur,—and called,
and caused in state aloft to ride,'[3]

The poet humbles himself here to the level of a cur as he has done in the past at Tirup-peruntuṟai.

' to me, a cur, He gave a royal seat ;
To me, a dog, all things not shown before, He showed ; '[4]

This striking similarity of expression shows that the experience viz. the mystic vision of God has been the same. It may also be noted that the name ' The Decad of the Humming Bee ' is symbolical of the poet's mystic experiences.

The song quoted above shows that the Divine principle which is ONE, manifests itself as the ' Flame of Fire ' and then sprouts into various forces. These forces activate the universe and all the phenomena it contains. Thus God causes the phenomena to appear. This universalisation of the Divine Force—God's omni-

[1] The Ammāṉai : 7 P. 121.
[2] Praise : Line 133. P. 38.
[3] The Humming Bee : 8 P. 146.
[4] The Sacred Cento : 28 P. 56.

presence and omnipotence is felt and realized by the poet to be true. The lines quoted from 'The Humming Bee' show this supreme awareness.

A part of the poet's awareness of Divnity as the universe is revealed in the following lines also :—

'Five fold Thou dost in earth extend,—. .
Fourfold Thou dost exist in the water,—. .
Threefold in fire Thou shinest,—. .
Two fold in the air Thou art all glorious,—. .
One in the ether Thou hast sprung forth,—. .'[1]

According to Akattiya Cūtram the theme of the poem, 'The Praise' is the creation of the world.[2]

The mystic's apprehension of Reality in the temporal world is another form of his apprehension of theReality in the Eternal world which again is reality in its immanental aspect in the form of splendour or dazzling light. 'The Humming Bee' and 'The Praise' reveal the poet's realization of this truth. The lyric sung at Tillai also reveals the same realization.

'Expanse of light, that everywhere through every world,
o'er earth and heaven springs forth and spreads alone !'[3]

The Lord who permeates all the 'elements' (phenomena) is the Absolute perceived by the poet in the mystic vision. In 'The Morning Hymn' he sings :—

"Though dwell'st in all the elements," 'tis said ; and yet
"Thou goest not, nor com'st ;" the sages thus have sung
Their rhythmic songs. Though neither have we heard nor learnt
of those that Thee by seeing of the eye have known.
. . . . . To us
In presence come ! .... FROM OFF THY COUCH IN GRACE ARISE !'[4]

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1 Praise : Lines 137-141 P. 38.
2 Short aphorisms on the Titles of Tiruvācakam.
3 The Temple Lyric : 8 P. 223.
4 The Morning Hymn : 5 P. 209-210.

The songs of this poem are all prayers to God in the form of invocation. The other decads namely 'The Wonder Decad', 'The Sacred Sadness', 'The Miracle Decad', etc. express the realization and fulfilment of all these prayers.

Māṇikkavācakar perceived God in all the natural phenomena; he saw Him in the Moon, and in the Sun. The Moon and the Sun are realized to be the external manifestations of the dazzling light perceived witin. Accordingly he sings :

'Thou Light, that shin'st a Sun through all the spheres,'[1]
'Day by day He to the sun its lustre gave.

In the sacred moon He placed its coolness ;'[2]

It is the divine attribute of Energy that actuates all elements, the natural phenomena and the vast universe. It is God who is seen as the Energy and vice versa, since it is not possible to distinguish between the attribute and the one that has the attribute. God is ONE ; God is multiform. Many are His attributes—their names are legion, for objects are legion. Māṇikkavācakar wonders why God is impelled to manifest in various energised forms to create this world of amazing multiforms. The answer is simply that this world is a means caused by Him for our own salvation. The souls that are engrossed in the worldly attachments are awakened by God's Grace and by His activating Energy. They attain the transcendental sense and Ñāṇa ; it is only to enable them to attain this supreme goal that God has caused this multiformity—this world. It is Māṇikkavācakar's conviction that the creation of the world is an act of Grace to redeem man. The Divine Grace is the source of all the forces already mentioned. The very first apprehension of Reality at Tirup-peruntuṛai itself is a sign of His overflowing Grace. Thus the poet concludes that the mystic vision of God seen first and the apprehension of Reality in the temporal world caused by his purged or purified consciousness do both result from Divine Grace.

Out of Grace, the Divine Being manifests Himself in all objects of the Universe to redeem man. He is the source of all created

[1] No joy in life : 7 P. 251.
[2] The Universe : Lines 20-21 P. 19.

beings. To Māṇikkavācakar this is not a mere philosophical doctrine, but a realized Truth. The beings or souls that 'stand and move'—the souls appearing as males or females or a-sexual-in all these, the divine energy manifests itself in myriad ways, viz. as energy of wisdom, as energy of desire, energy of action or love or affection and other emotions or values.

The ONE is seen as many and Māṇikkavācakar perceived this amazing energy in all the forms around him, in 'all objects of all thought, rolling through all things.'[1]

> 'See, He is That that stands, and That that goes!'[2]
> 'See Him, the Male, the Female, and "neither one"!'[3]
> 'See, even I have seen Him with my eyes!'[4]

Thus God's Grace is the prime source of all phenomena and beings. He is the Germ of all being. The poet elaborates it saying,

> 'Earth, water, fire, air, ether vast, the wandering moon, the sun,
> And man,—to sense revealed: EIGHT WAYS He joined Himself to me;
> Throughout seven worlds, in regions ten, He moves: yet One alone
> Is He! ....'[5]

Thus Māṇikkavācakar felt the universality of God by personal experience—this was a realization which came out of His grace. It is not a mere fact of knowledge but a truth felt intensely or rather a profound experience. God's grace is all in all, and this divine grace or Mercy has always been symbolised as a Female power—the Mother Goddess. Māṇikkavācakar knew that this is the traditional way of personifying God's grace. He too felt and worshipped the grace of God as a Mother Goddess. The Mother image is kindness incarnate. Hence the association. He recalls that God has appeared to the earlier mystics with His consort. So the poet prays for a similar vision:

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[1] Wordsworth—Tintern Abbey: Lines 101-102.
[2] The Universe: Line 53 P. 21.
[3] Ibid: Line 57, P. 21
[4] Ibid: Line 58, P. 21.
[5] The Tōṇōkkam: 5 P. 184.

'Thou, with Thy tender Spouse, Thy servants' lowly huts
in grace didst visit, entering each, Supernal One!'[1]

He recalls his own vision of His flame-like feet and prays for a similar vision in the company of His consort.

'Like ruddy fire Thou once didst show Thy sacred form;
didst show me Perun-turrai's temple, where Thou dwell'st;

As Anthanan̲ didst show Thyself, and make me Thine.
Ambrosia rare! FROM OFF THY COUCH IN GRACE ARISE!'[2]

His prayer was granted. It is God's Grace that manifests itself as the consort. He signs accordingly:

'Thou and the Grace, that flower-like blooms from forth Thy form,
Ambrosia rare! FROM OFF THY COUCH IN GRACE ARISE!'[3]

His first mystic vision at Perunturai converted him into a spiritual pilgrim and as such it happened to be the starting point of his mystic life. Now his apprehension of God with Divine Mother, the Grace, was another milestone in the progress of his mystic life and this confirmed his faith in 'life in tune with the Infinite or the Divine Will.'

Without Grace there can be no apprehension of the Reality. Māṇikkavācakar was aware of this truth. Therefore, he asks

'How far away had I and all my thought
from Him the loving Lord reamined,

Had not the Wearer of the flowing lock,—
He with the Lady,—made me His!'[4]

The Divine Mother has to bless him with Her Grace. It is She who hastens to rescue the lovers of God even before they think of Him.

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[1] The Morning Hymn: 8 P. 211.
[2] *Ibid*: P. 211.
[3] *Ibid*: 10 P. 212.
[4] The Humming Bee: 15 P. 149.

'. . . . As she, mindful of those who love our King,
who like herself, our Mistress, never quit His side ;'[1]

God is the Master, ruling over his soul ; and His Grace is personified as the Mother who holds the supreme sway. Can any one distinguish 'the dancer from the dance'?[2] Similarly God and His Grace as Mother Goddess are indistinguishable like the heat and light of the flame. Māṇikkavācakar knew the 'oneness' of Divinity and as if to establish this 'inseparableness' Māṉikkavācakar sees a vision which is said to reveal the glory of Divine Mercy :

'Lo, I have seen His mercy's might !
. . . .
. in grace He made me Him !
See, her His Spouse whose eyes are dark-blue lotus flowers !
See, Her and Him together stand !'[3]

Here in this vision one half of God's figure is said to be a female in form. In another song he reveals the same truth in beautiful descriptive poetry. He says how one half of the Divine Form was decked aptly with ornaments pertaining to man and the other half was richly bejewelled as in a woman.

'The tiger's skin, the robe, the pendants rare,
the ears' round golden ornaments,

The ashes white as milk, the sandal paste
so cool and sweet, the parrot green,

The trident, and the armlets linked : this pomp,
and ancient fair array He owns,'[4]

Māṇikkacācakar sings of this unique form in many a lyric.

'The Beautiful, Who made the Queen with flowing locks
part of Himself ;'[5]

'Bridegroom' of Her with fawnlike eyes,'[6]

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[1] The Maidens' Song of the Dawning : 16 P. 114.
[2] W. B. Yeats, 'Among School Children' : 8th Verse, the last line.
[3] The Universe : Lines 60-65 P. 22.
[4] The Humming Bee : 18 P. 150.
[5] The Head Decad : 2 P. 315.
[6] Praise—Line 135 P. 38.

Apart from the mystic conception of God as the 'Bridegroom', there is a Puranic tradition also, which conceives God as the 'Bridegroom' (Maṅkai Maṇāḷaṉ or Umāpati).

Long before Māṇikkavācakar had the Grace realization, he speaks of his having received this Grace in abundance. He says that he was brought up by the Mother—'Tiruaruḷ'—Divine Grace.

> 'Sing ye the glory of Her Foot, Who armlets wears,
> Whose guardian care we own!'[1]

Here in this song he uses the term, 'Pētittu' which means 'Having differentiated' or 'concealed'. It is God's will and Grace that first made the poet wallow in ignorance concealing the Reality, making the world appear an end in itself with all its temptations. It is the same will or Grace again that made him face the inner struggle and free his mind from all the bonds of attachment through Purgation.[2] In the former state of life he was bound to the attachments of the world and God alone had saved him by His Grace. In the latter state, he was freed and enlightened—self-awakened. Even during this phase of life, it is God's Grace that saved him from any sense of void or emptiness, and nurtured his soul within. Thus God's Grace nurses and protects the soul, with loving-kindness like a fond mother. Hence Māṇikkavācakar aptly calls it the 'Mother'.

The poet now looks upon his mental agony of the first stage as caused by the Grace of God. He realized that God willed him to suffer thus and that his love for God was a rescuing force to purify his soul. Or, he might have felt that it was God's will that he was first engrossed in wordly pursuits, later realised their hollowness and redeemed his self. Attachment too, spring from God's will. The line

> 'for Him Who is the Bond and the Release;'[3]

shows that the poet sees God in the bonds of life as well, and it is God who frees him from the bonds. As God permeates both by

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[1] The Maidens' Song of the Dawning: 14 P. 111

[2] Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy calls this aspect of Grace as 'Tirotāṇa Shakti'.

[3] The Gold Dust: 20 P. 138.

His will and Grace, the poet realizes that this world of 'bonds' is a means to free the self from 'bonds' of attachments. We do not know when the souls attained the acquisitive quality that leads to attachments. But mystics succeed in getting rid of these attachments of self, (though they suffer intensely because of them) and their souls are awakened by the Grace of God and they attain Illumination. They begin to look upon the world not as an impediment to spiritual progress but as a means of redeeming their souls. They attain the grace of God. This Grace-realization brings them inner freedom.

Māṇikkavācakar like Thompson sings of God as the Munificent ONE, Who by His Grace condescends to come down to the earth from His abode in Heaven in order to redeem and save men.

> 'Thou KUYIL small, that dost frequent the grove with sweet fruit rich, hear this !
>
> The Gracious-One Who left the heavens, enter'd this earth, made man His own ;
>
> The Only-One, despised the flesh, entered my soul, and fills my thought ;—
>
> The Bridegroom of the Fawn-eyed-one that gently rules,— GO HITHER CALL !'[1]

We have seen that the poet's apprehension of Reality or Absolute in its Immanent aspect was through various forms—such as the vision of the Flame, vision of the Holy Feet, the vision of the beautiful forms, and the vision of God and Goddess. Now let us turn to Māṇikkavācakar's apprehension of the Reality in its transcendental aspect.

3. *The Transcendental aspect.*

It is interesting to note Underhill's words regarding this transcendental aspect.

'As in conversion, so here, Reality may be apprehended in either transcendent, or immanent, positive or negative terms. It

[1] The Kuyil Decad : 4 P. 199.

is both near and far: 'closer to us than our most inward part, and higher than our highest'.[1]

This is illustrated from the confessions of St. Augustine of Hippo. She illustrates further from De Mystica Theologia written by Dionysius the Areopagite—To a certain type of mind, the veritable practice of the Presence of God is not the intimate and adorable companionship of the personal Comrade or the Inward Light, but the awe-struck contemplation of the Absolute, the 'naked Godhead', source and origin of all that is. It is an ascent to the supernal plane of perception, where 'the simple, absolute and unchangeable mysteries of heavenly Truth lie hidden in the dazzling obscurity of the secret Silence, outshining all brilliance with the intensity of their darkness, and surcharging our blinded intellects with the utterly impalpable and invisible fairness of glories which exceed all beauty.'[2]

It was already mentioned that Māṇikkavācakar's self-awakening at Peruntuṛai brought about an extraordinary conversion of the inner being or soul. This was the harbinger to the later developments in the poet. In the stage of awakening, the poet apprehended God at times in His immanent aspect and in certain other times in His transcendental aspect. Hence he invoked God in exultation—

'Thou'rt afar, art near.'[3]

he sings. Moreover, he says,

'. . . . While heavenly ones extolled
Thou didst lie hid, our mighty Lord ! . . . .
. . .
'To me, mean as I was, with no good thing, Thou didst grant grace,
That I, with mind erewhile embruted,—pure one !—should
Become commingling love, in soul-subduing rapture melt !
Thou cam'st in grace on this same earth, didst show Thy mighty feet

[1] Mysticism: P. 251.
[2] 'De Mystica Theologia', i. 1 (Rolt's translation) As quoted by Underhill, 'Mysticism'.. P. 251.
[3] Civaṉ's Ways of Old: Line 44 P. 4.

To me who lay mere slave,—meaner than any dog,—
Essential grace more previous than a mother's love !'[1]

These words show that at the period of self-awakening, the poet was aware of the dual nature of God—His immanence and transcendence.

During the period of Illumination also the poet perceived God in His immanent and transcendental aspects.

This fact is borne out by the first stanza in 'The Temple Lyric' composed at Tillai. He invokes the Lord as

'. . . . Light Superne, that ever springing fill'st my soul !'[2]

The direct form of address to the supernal Light, is to be noted. His transcendental aspect is taken to be His Real aspect and the poet longs for the vision :

'Come, . .

and give me grace to see Thee as Thou art.'[3]

Of course, Māṇikkavācakar was fully aware that the Supreme is formless. When his soul was totally imbued with God-love, when he enjoyed communion with God, when all sense of discordance was lost and the 'unitive way' was the only Reality he composed the Decad 'The Tambour Song', where he calls God as the One non-denominational and formless.[4] The Divine Being is vast, without limits, spreading over and filling all space, being an immeasurable, formless essence. This immeasurable limitlessness is a sign of God's transcendence and Māṇikkavācakar was conscious of this aspect of God.

It requires an extraordinarily subtle consciousness to experience this vast, ineffable, limitlessness of God. It is subtler than the super-consciousness of the first stage which made him see God in certain recognizable forms. But even then he sang, 'The Lord like a subtle being, passed into the core of my being'.

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[1] *Ibid* : Lines 49-50 ; 56-61 P. 5.
[2] The Temple Lyric : 1 P. 219.
[3] *Ibid.* P. 219.
[4] *Ibid.*

' Māl, Ayan̲, all the gods, and Sciences divine,
His essence cannot pierce. This Being rare drew near to me ;'[1]

He felt perhaps that he had not mellowed enough to visualize God in His Formless state of existence. Therefore, he prays to Him for apprehending His real Nature.

' Even the sages and wise men who have known you before, now pine away longing for a vision of Thy Holy Feet. You are the thing beyond their consciousness. You are the ONE beyond everything '—says the poet.[2]

In the book ' Tirukkōvaiyār ' composed by Māṇikkāvacakar, we come across the words : ' He who is beyond all consciousness even to those who are conscious '.[3] All these show that Māṇikka-vācakar knew that a subtler and higher consciousness extremely refined, is required to experience God's transcendence. Underhill also speaks of it as ' an ascent to the supernal plane of perception '.[4]

It is interesting to note here that Saint Rāmaliṅkar also speaks of the various stages of divine consciousness, one subtler than the previous one, and all forming a ladder, so to say, of supernal planes of perception. Thus he refers to the first stage of transcendental awareness as Paraveḷi (Divine space), the next subtler stage as Parampara Veḷi (Divining space) and the last as Parāpara Veḷi (Transcendental space).[5] Since the consciousness grows subtler in correspondence with the apprehension of the vastness of God's presence, Saint Rāmaliṅkar uses the term ' Veḷi ' (space) to refer to it. As the consciousness becomes subtler, it grows and expands filling all space and reaching beyond. Now it may be noted that Māṇikkavācakar had this most subtle consciousness which enabled him to apprehend God's transcendence.

' To Hari and to Brahma and to other gods
Not manifested, Civan̲ came in presence there,
Melted our hearts, . . .'[6]

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[1] The Tambour—Song : 14 P. 157.
[2] The Temple Lyric : 4 P. 221.
[3] *Ibid* : 9 P. 223.
[4] Mysticism : P. 251.
[5] Tiru Arutpa Aruṭperunjoti Akaval : Lines : 563-565.
[6] The Tambour Song : 3 P. 153.

Here the first half, ' To Hari and to Brahma and to other gods not manifested, Civam ' reveals His transcendence ; the latter half shows the poet's realization of His trsnscendence.

There is another poem indicating the formlessness and limitlessness of the Divine Being.

> ' Beneath the sevenfold gulf, transceneing speech, His foot-flower rests ;
>
> with flowers adorned His crown of all the universe is crown ! '[1]

Here the vision of Civam, coupled with Shakti is also mentioned, but the poet adds that this vision is but one aspect only and that God is beyond this Form. As he sings that God is not contained in forms such as this or that, we can say that he realized, by means of his extremely subtle consciousness, the transcendental aspect of the formless, limitless Absolute. This is visualization of God Who is beyond the manifestations of the various phenomena of the universe. God is beyond the attribute. He is beyond apprehension even. One who transcends all conception cannot be denominational. Hence the poet's words,

> ' What is His Town ? His Name ? His kin ? and who His foes ?
>
> And how sing we His praise ? '[2]

God's transcendence though felt, is ineffable ; it cannot be put in words. It is beyond, the only beyond as such, so to say. But at the same time, the poet-saint cannot suppress expression. The poet in him cannot but speak of this unique experience. He tries to compare in the poem, ' The Universe ', God's transcendental existence and the vast, limitless worlds of the universe. He says that the numerous worlds, numbering more than hundred and one crores are dwarfed to the size of mere dust particles reflected in a ray of sunlight creeping through a hole in a cottage when compared with the vast, limitless Being—God in His transcendental aspect.

[1] The Maidens' Song of the Dawnig : 10 P. 109.
[2] The Maidens' Song of the Dawning : 10 P. 109.

'The development of the sphere of the elemental universe,
Its immeasurable nature, and abundant phenomena,—
If one would tell their beauty in all its particulars,—
As when,—more than a hundred millions in number spread abroad,—
The thronging atoms are seen in the ray that enters the house,
So is He the GREAT ONE, WHO exists in the minutest elements.'[1]

What a vivid simile ! The poet-saint has felt this extraordinary nature of God's transcendence in his life. This is seen from the words in his poem, 'The Marshalling of the Sacred Host'

'The Endless, Indivisible shall in us dwell ;'[2]

We have studied so far Māṇikkavācakar's consciousness of the dual aspect of Divinity, his mental state when he had the apprehension of the Reality in the temporal and eternal worlds. Now the impact of this extraordinaty experience upon the poet's mind, the consequent bliss, enlightenment and sublimation may be seen. Let us now study the real nature of the deep and profound love of the poet springing from continual contact with God.

4. *Impact of the experience :*

The experience of the mystic vision leaves a deep impression in the mind of the poet. The influence of this experience is profound, bringing about an inner conversion as we have already mentioned. Now he learns to love all beings ; in fact, this emotion is overwhelming and it enables him to realise Reality more and more intensely. The mystic experience leaves its indelible impressions on the growing mind and intellect of the poet and his body and soul do both respond to the powerful impact of mystic vision. In fact, his body, mind and soul, his whole being, enjoyed the mystic apprehension of the Reality and changed as a result.

The vision of God results from transcendental or mystic consciousness of the soul. However, the soul's experience is reflected

[1] The Universe—Lines 1-6 P. 18.
[2] The Marshalling of the Sacred Host : 3 P. 343

in the mind because of the close relation between the two. Naturally the soul's experience appears as the mind's exprience. Saint Rāmaliṅkar sings of this, using the symbolic situation of the heroine conversing with her companion. The heroine stands for the soul ; the companion for the mind. The heroine confides her experience to her companion.[1] Hence the aptness of the simile to show the intimacy between the soul and the mind.

The experience of the soul is ineffable, but when it is reflected in the mind, it becomes a bliss that can be caught in words, or a feeling that can be expressed poetically. Hence the poet sings :

> ' Civan̲, the mighty Lord, as honey and as rare ambrosia sweet,
> Himself He came, entered my soul,—to me His slave gave grace ;[2]

Thus the vision of Civan̲ yields an unknown joy before which the joys of the world appear reduced to nothing. He begins despising worldly joys and longing for supreme bliss.

Again he sings : ' Since the Lord has entered the mind, melted the heart and given him supreme bliss, the attachment to senses and wealth and kinship is relieved. '

> ' I wealth and kindred and all other bliss
> enjoy'd ; by tender maidens' charms was stirr'd ;
> I wandered free in joyous intercourse ;
> such goodly qualities it seemed were there.
> He set me free ; to stay the course of ' deeds '
> my foes, He showed His foot-flowers' tender grace,
> My spirit stirred, entered within, and made me His :
> THIS MATCHLESS MIRACLE I KNOW NOT, I ! '[3]

Later God enabled him to apprehend Him thereby giving him true joy, yet vanished again making him suffer again. But God appeared again to give him supreme joy. This experience, with

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[1] Tiru-Aruṭpā : VI Book : 42 The Poem, ' Experiences '.
[2] Sacred Sadness : 10 P. 301.
[1] The Miracle Decad : 5 P. 311.

joy and despair alternated is described by means of a beautiful simile :

‘ Busied in earth I acted many a lie ;
I spake of ‘ I ’ and ‘ mine, ’ —illusions old ;
Nor shunned what caused me pain ; while sins increased
I wandered raving. Me, that BEING RARE,—
By the great mystic Vedas sought in vain,—
held fast in presence there ; to lowly me
Essential sweetness was the food He gave :
THIS MIRACLE OF GRACE I KNOW NOT, I ! ’[1]

These words remind us of Rulman Merswin’s mystic experience.

‘ God showed Himself by turns hard and gentle : to each access of misery succeeded the rapture of supernatural grace. ’[2]

It is God Who makes the soul suffer because of the bonds of attachments. It is God again Who relieves all the suffering thus caused and yields supreme bliss. Thus the song shows that purgation and Illumination alternate in the life of the mystic.

‘ As honey, rare ambrosia, ever choicest sweet,
He gave His grace, in ways the heavenly ones know not :
The WARRIOR crowned with cassia’s honied flowers ;
as glorious light ’[3]

Honey, ambrosia, candy are the terms used by him to refer to the sweetness of this divine experience. The memory of the mystic vision is also sweet. In another song he says that he cannot adequately describe the sweetness of the mystic communion even by means of the similes given, for the mystic experience beggars all description.

‘ In deathless rapture’s flood our souls He plunges, ’[4] says the poet.

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[1] *Ibid* : 3 P. 310.
[2] Mysticism, Underhill—P. 228.
[3] The Ammāṇai : 16 P. 125.
[4] The Sacred Pāṇdi : 8 P. 290.

When this rapturous flood fills his soul, he sings shedding tears of joy and dancing in delight.[1]

Music came with experience of joy and the sweet sounds made by the lyre appear to be sweeter than ever before.[2] Everything is part of the divine bliss with which his whole being is flooded. The joy that ensues from the mystic experience is thus pure, and unalloyed, causing physical responses.

'. . .He came to sacred Perun-turrai's shrine.
And, while ambrosia flowing filled our frames, showed us His foot, and said 'Behold' !'[3]

Even the body is said to experience a new joy as though ambrosia flows through its veins. Māṇikkavācakar felt the sweetness of it all so thoroughly. Ambrosia springs in the physical veins and even the very bones are said to melt. Such is the influence of supreme bliss.

'My iron mind full often didst Thou draw, and melt my frame ;'[4]
'The springing of ambrosia and melting of frame' is felt at the period of Illumination and later at the time of 'union' as mentioned in the 'unitive way'. The body and the mind are in consonance with his soul during Illumination. There is complete integration. This experience of joy felt along the body, in the mind and in the soul gives rise to a kind of ecstatic frenzy[5]—an immeasurable God-love. This made him look a lunatic. Experiences of Illumination makes him forget his self, and roam about the streets shouting the praises of God in this mental state of excessive love of God.

We have seen that the apprehension of God makes the poet intoxicated with His love. The enjoyment of the Grace of God flowing within leads to self-realization or Ñāṉa. It must be noted that it is difficult to totally separate the experience, God-love born of it, and Ñāṉa—spiritual wisdom, since all the three, though spoken of as separate strands, are intricately inter-twined as the Illumination. The Illumination in this spiritual sense is at once

[1] 'To sing with gladsome melody and dance our endless task. . . .
If He. . .come, in grace made manifest to me '—
The Marshalling of the Sacred Host : 1 P. 342.

[2] *Ibid* : 6 P. 344.

[3] The Head Decad : 5 P. 316.

[4] Sacred Sadness : 1 P. 298.

[5] Mine eyes have sseen : 7 P. 266.

the experience of bli;s, irresistible love and the Ñāṉa, blended into one experience. All the three aspects are called the Light by the poet. All the three mean the apprehension of the Reality. Moreover, it is also truly wise to visualise the natural phenomena as manifestations of God. This wisdom or Ñāṉa is the soul's awakening. Māṇikkavācakar's reason had only taught him to distinguish the objects of the world and to be conscious of the conflicting dualities of life such as good and evil, light and darkness, truth and falsehood, attachment and freedom, etc. But with the dawn of true wisdom, the duality of the world disappears. All conflicting factors, and discardant elements are at an end. There is awareness of the ONE reality and of the ONENESS of all life.

> ' Melting my inmost frame, He killed the germ of twofold deeds ;—
> Pluck out my rooted griefs ;—made purely one the manifold ;—
> So that all former things might perish quite, He entered in ! '[1]

This results from the mystic vision of the Reality in the temporal world. From this again results the sense of renunciation. The poet does not want to own anything for himself. The possessive instinct is dead and the man who has been a minister discards all unnecessary articles of dress, wears a loin cloth and holds a bowl. It is not food for the belly that he should seek ;—if others gave him food, he can take it without attachment ; that is enough. The only real thing he ought to seek is the Grace of God as symbolised by the Holy Feet of Civaṉ. He decides now that the be-all and end-all of all his life is to seek to be in blissful communion with God and enjoy the Divine Radiance of the mystic vision, that can be apprehend off and on.

> ' The potsherd and the skull I deemed my kin ; my soul dissolved ;
> Wealth to be sought was Civaṉ's foot alone, I clearly saw ;
> With soul and body to the earth in worship bent, a slave,
> I'VE REACH'D HIM WHERE HE DANCES, LORD OF TILLAI'S HOME OF JOY ! '[2]

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[1] The Decad of Glorious Tillai : 3 P. 305.
[2] The Decad of Glorious Tillai : 1 P. 304.

Union with God is the goal—the Unitive Life. He ought to be one with the Light, he perceived. With this conviction, he commences to follow the only path felt to be true for union with God. His determination grows stronger and stronger fed by the mystic vision and fervid longing for the vision.

Next, another aspect of Māṇikkavācakar's way of Illumination is taken up.

Underhill speaks of auditive type of mystics who hear voices. Māṇikkavācakar too heard voices. The sounding of the anklets while describing the first awakening of the soul at Peruntuṟai has already been mentioned. Similar instances from the lives of other Tamil mystics had been referred to. Māṇikkavācakar heard voices or sounds even at this period of Illumination. In the 'Marshalling of the Sacred Host' he refers to the mystic music of the bell.

> 'The mystic music of the beauteous gems, within my soul shall thrilling sound ;—'[1]

> 'The pure gems' worldless music then shall rapture yield ;—'[2]

In another song of the same poem he speaks of the sounds emerging from a shell.

> 'From shell that music breathes the sounds shall then burst forth ;—'[3]

The reference to the humming sound of the Bee in the Decad on the Humming Bee may be taken as reference to the mystic sounds he heard. There is a passage in Tirumantiram which says that mystics usually hear sounds of bell, conch, bees or peacocks.[4]

Joan of Arc heard the mystic music of the bell.[5]

Māṇikkavācakar's experience of the Illumination and its various aspects have been hitherto examined.

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[1] The Marshalling of the Sacred Host : 4 P. 343 Pope's translation differs here.

[2] *Ibid* : 7 P. 345.

[3] *Ibid* : 8 P. 345.

[4] Tirumantiram : III Tantram : 58 & 59.

[5] It is interesting to note that St. John also heard the voice of God in the music of the bell. Bernard Shaw accounts for the mysterious voice in his preface to the play 'St. John'

6. THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

Evelyn Underhill, in her study of the mystical life-processes in man, refers to a most intense period of a great ' Swing-back into darkness ' which divides the ' first mystic life ' or Illuminative Way from the ' Second mystic life ' or Unitive Way. She refers to this as ' a period of utter blankness and stagnation so far as mystical activity is concerned ' . . . . . . The once possessed power of orison or contemplation now seems wholly lost. The self is tossed back from its hard-won point of vantage. Impotence, blankness, solitude are the epithets by which those immersed in this dark fire of purification describe their pains.[1]

Underhill also explains in detail ' the dark night ' from the psychological angle and it is worth quoting the passage here before examining Māṇikkavācakar's experience of a similar kind.

' The renewed and ecstatic awareness of the Absolute which resulted (from the Purgative way) and which was the governing characteristic of Illumination, brought its own negation : the awareness, that is to say, of the self's continued separation from and incompatibility with that Absolute which it has perceived . . . . the state of illumination begins to break up, the complementary negative consciousness appears and shows itself as an overwhelming sense of darkness and deprivation. This sense is so deep and strong that it inhibits all consciousness of the Transcendent ; and plunges the self into the state of negation and misery which is called the " Dark Night ".'[2]

The mystical or transcendental aspect of the Dark Night is also explained by Underhill :

[1] Mysticism. P. 381.
[2] Mysticism Pi 381-82

'For the mystic who has once known the Beatific vision there can be no greater grief than the withdrawal of this Object from his field of consciousness ; the loss of this companionship, the extinction of this Light. Therefore, whatever form the 'Dark Night' assumes, it must entail bitter suffering : far worse than that endured in the Purgative way.'[1]

In the light of these statements, we shall study in this Chapter Māṇikkavācakar's experience of the 'Dark Night' and the real nature of the agony caused by the 'negation of Illumination'.

The Dark Night of the Soul is said to be the 'proper negation of Illumination' and it marks the crisis of transition from one mystic state to another. There are ample evidences to show that Māṇikkavācakar who has experienced the exalted ecstasy to 'Illumination' has also experienced this 'psychic fatigue'.—and passed through a phase of overwhelming darkness and deprivation.

He has been blessed with the beatific vision of the Holy Feet of God, which were placed on his head as a mark of the divine bestowal of Grace. The personal form of God was also perceived by the poet-saint, manifested as Civa and Shakti. He realised that God is at once his father, mother and guru and that he is His son. Such is the intimacy of realization, that he looked upon God as a dearest friend or Master. This perception, this inner experience, this intimate consciousness of the presence of God is suddenly swept away, resulting in a feeling of utter deprivation and agony ; in other words, the experience of the 'Dark night of the soul' sets in. The negation of the divine consciousness brings unconsolable grief and the poet mourns :

'In love He came, and rapture gave in olden days,
to me His slave !
And then He left me on this wide vast earth to
wander "wildered!"'[2]

He identifies himself as God's own son and he laments asking his father

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[1] *Ibid*, P. 389.
[2] Mystic Union : 6 P. 245.

'Will you leave me Thy son, crying out like this.'[1]

He had expressed his pangs of separation in the purgative stage. But now he expresses a deeper and more intense grief at the loss of Grace once bestowed. He cries out :

'. . . . NO JOY have I upon this sea-girt earth,
BE GRACIOUS, BID ME COME TO THEE !'[2]

This prayer born of intense anguish is expressed throughout the decad, 'No joy in life'.

From the Decad of Grace, we understand that he tried many a time to revive the transcendental vision, but failed in all his efforts.

'Sole Deity ! through all the world Thyself
I sought lamenting loud, but found Thee not.'[3]

All exeternal objects or the natural phenomena of the Universe are all manifestations of God and the poet-saint had realised it through his apprehension of the Reality. But once the Illumination is gone, he tries again to have the same experience and struggles hard, but fails in his attempts. Hence his cry of despair :

'O Dancer ! Spotless One ! O ash-besmear'd !
Thy brow hath central eye ! Lord of heaven's host !
Sole Deity ! through all the world Thyself
I sought lamenting loud, but found Thee not'.[4]

What a forlorn sense of waste and loneliness !

To him who had tasted the radiant glory of God (in the illuminative stage of mystic experience) there is nothing but dense darkness around. Hence his prayer :

'Cut short Thy work ! O light, let darkness
flee before Thy mercy's beam !'[5]

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[1] Weariness of Life : 7 P. 228.
It is also possible to interpret the word 'Cēyaṉ' as one who is far away. Hence Pope's translation differs here.
[2] No joy in life : 1 P. 248.
[3] Grace : P. 255.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] The Supplication : 7 P. 271,

In this mood of despair, he complains to God, claiming to be relieved by Him.

> '. . . To whom make I my plaint, whom blame, if Thou
> Who mad'st me Thine deny Thy grace ? '[1]
>
> ' Thine own stood round, and all declar'd :
> ' No grace withheld, all grace
>
> Is given, ' —and I, Thy servant, shall I mourn
> as aliens wont ? '[2]

Here the tone of complaint is intimate. He feels that he has been deprived of the Grace, while his disciples at Peruntuṛai enjoy it for ever. He is not half so blessed as they have been. He suffers keenly and asks what God gains by making him suffer like this.

He cannot account for the denial of the mystic experience. The unbored gourd only floats on the water but never sinks in it ; similarly I do but float on the divine flood of Thy Grace without ever getting submerged in the experience. Why do you let me drift along like this ? If it pleased you to do so, all right, do it.

> ' Thou Partner sole of the Gazelle ! Sweet fruit
> to them that worship Thee !
>
> Teacher ! If I am like an UNBOR'D GOURD,
> doth thus Thy glory live ?
>
> O King, when comes the time that Thou wilt grant
> in grace to me
>
> A soul that melts and swells in knowing Thee,
> Who cam'st in flesh ?[3]

Here the poet takes the liberty of almost getting angry with God like a near relative who has been denied some privilege. It is clear from his supplications that he yearns for the unitive experience with God.

Māṇikkavācakar's kinship with God is deep and intimate. His love for Him is passionate and boundless. It is as profound

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[1] No joy in life : 1 P. 248.
[2] The Supplication : 9 P. 271.
[3] The Supplication : 10 P. 272.

and fervid as the bride's love for her lover. But this love is not yet fulfilled. The devotee, like a bride, has to indulge in sulking with the Lord ; like a bride he wants to commune with Him. He longs to experience the Supreme bliss of communion and dance in ecstasy. But no ! this was not to be ! for, the perception of God was suddenly denied to him causing extreme anguish.

> 'In concert joining shall Thy saints, there bending smile and joy ?
>
> O Master, drooping, all forlorn, like withered tree, must I
>
> Stand sullen while they mingle, melt, souls swelling, lost in bliss
>
> In rhythmic dance ? Grant bliss of sweet communion with Thy grace !'[1]

The excessive longing for communion is nothing but the longing to move into the higher planes of consciousness or experience the mystic consciousnes for ever. The fulfilment of this longing is imagined as a process of evolution. He thinks of the symbol of a tree. God-love, sown as a seed in his heart, has sprouted and grown into a big tree, with branches full of thick foliage, very pleasant to look at. It has grown stage by stage—this tree of God-love—with buds, flowers and fruits coming forth in rapid succession. But the unexpected separation of God—the surging desolation and despair of the mind—the spiritual darkness destroys this symbolic vision of the tree and its fruition. The tree withers. The poet cries out in sorrow :

> '. . . . drooping, all forlorn, like withered tree, must I
>
> Stand sullen. . '[2]

This sense of utter deprivation is aptly depicted by Underhill in connection with Madame Guyon's life ;

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[1] The Supplication : 11 P. 272.
[2] The Supplication : 11 P. 272.

'The neat edifice of her first mystic life was in ruins, the state of consciousness which accompanied it was disintegrated, but nothing arose to take its place.'[1]

In Māṇikkavācakar's life there is the nostalgic memory of the perception of the Absolute in the temporal world ; this gives rise to excessive, almost fanatical longing to be one with Him. On the other hand, there is the keen, pathetic awarness of the absence of the Vision. Caught between these two extremes, the mind yields to despair.

'It is an amazing thing', says Madame Guyon, 'for a soul that believed herself to be advanced in the way of perfection, when she sees herself thus to go to pieces all at once.'[2]

Underhill illustrates this agony from the lives of Suso and Madame Guyon.

The mental suffering undergone during the period of purgation is relieved at the time of Illumination and an intense and loving consciousness of God pervades ; but this feeling of fulfilment does not last long. This consciousness suddenly breaks up and the self is tossed back to an old and lower level, where it loses its apprehension of the transcendental world. Underhill compares this state to that of a child 'who, when first it is forced to stand alone, feels weaker than it did in its mother's arms'.[3]

Māṇikkavācakar experiences both this stage of fulfilment and a corresponding disappointment. This is borne out by his words—

'Thy slave's afflictions all to drive far off I deem'd

Thou mad'st me Thine, erewhile ; . .[4]

Purgation of the soul is a continuous process, as we have already mentioned.

Now let us examine the nature of the attachments that assailed the poet-saint at the period of the Dark Night of the Soul.

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[1] Mysticism : P. 385-386.
[2] 'Les Torrents' Pt. i. cap. vii. As quoted by Underhill, 'Mysticism', P. 386.
[3] Mysticism, P. 387.
[4] The Bruised Heart : 2 P. 273.

How is it that the lapses of the mind recur, even after the soul's perception of the Reality? We can only say that the sense of being the subject—the sense of 'I-hood'[1] is still lingering, activating the body, mind and intellect of the poet-saint. It is this core of personality that is still inviolable and ineradicable that causes the sense of loss to recur.

The unique characteristics of the mystic experience of Illumination is the joy of the apprehension of Reality in its immanent and transcendental forms. This involves enjoyment, and consciousness of enjoyment as well. Māṇikkavācakar too was transcendentally aware of the Supreme bliss of Illumination. This is clear from his words :

'. . . Thou . . . .

. . gav'st Thy grace ; and giving mad'st me glad.

I trod on air, ...'[2]

Here he refers to his own sense of pride. This pride is born of his sense of I-hood which again is another expression of self-will. Self-will, though inclined towards good, is yet a sign of individuality or sense of I-hood. We have already seen how the poet struggled hard to get rid of all sense of ego born of both external and internal bonds of attachments. The struggle still continues, leading to this extreme anguish of the 'Dark Night'.

Self-will induces pride which, in turn, makes it impossible for Māṇikkavācakar to experience the mystic vision of the Absolute. As self-will is so strongly assertive, he prays for death.

'. . . —Command that I should die, —'[3].

Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar says that it means a prayer for the release from all bonds of attachments that life involves. Māṇikkavācakar prays here to get rid of the sense of 'I-hood'.[4] In the poem, 'Supplication' he prays :

'. . . . shall it be giv'n to sinful me

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[1] 'I-hood' is to be interpreted as 'Ātma-bhōtam' whereas ego is gross and to be interpreted as '-Malabhōtam' or Āṇavamalam.
[2] Weariness of Life : 3 P. 226.
[3] Weariness of Life : 3 P. 227.
[4] Tiruvācaka Viyākyāṇam: P. 764.

By Thine own grace, gaining the ancient sea of
bliss superne,

To rest, in soul and body freed from thought of
" I " and " mine " ? '[1]

It is the self or soul that apprehends the vision of the Reality. How then is it wrong for the soul to feel that it has perceived the vision ? Here what Māṇikkavācakar says must be noted. He says :

' Ev'n me, the meanest one, Thou didst as thing of
worth regard,
and gav'st Thy grace ; '[2]

The soul cannot perceive except as willed by God. Therefore, he feels that God Himself offered His Grace. In the Decad of ' The Garland of Rapture ' the poet says—' You gave me a glory—a place unknown to me before '.

'Thou gav'st the station blest I knew not of ;
but I knew not Thy grace,—was lost !

Master, no failure is in Thee at all ;
Who comes to aid Thy slave ? I cry ![3]

It is by God's will that the soul apprehends the vision. The experience of the Illumination is not springing from self-will but Divine Grace. He realised that it is God who made him perceive the Light. But during the illuminative stage, he had the awareness that ' I am enjoying '. Hence the divine experience was obstructed. In another place he cries out

' . . —me trembling cur, Thou mad'st Thine own ;
that grace
through senses' perturbations I forgot ; '[4]

The poet believes that the experience is God-given because it is not felt by normal consciousness, but results from a mystic or transcendental consciousness, which was caused by God Himself

[1] The Supplication : 5 P. 270.
[2] Weariness of Life : 3 P. 226.
[3] The Garland of Rapture : 2 Pp. 347, 348.
[4] No joy in life : 6 P. 251.

who manifested Himself as the Guru at Tirup-peruntuṛai and as the Flame of Fire or Civam in his mind.

His grief at this self-awareness of his mind is an aspect of the anguish caused at this period of the 'Dark Night of the soul'. Moreover, he condemns himself for forgetting God and allowing his love for Him to cool down. In the Decad of Devout Musings he sings :

'I've ceased to cherish Thee ; I've ceased
to utter childlike praise ; . . . .
. . . . ; the state, that melting
thinks on Thee,
By meannesses I've ceas'd to know ;'[1]

He says that because of his own failings, he will be ashamed of seeing Him again, even if He were to appear again before him.

'I see Thy gracious feet no more, which seeing erst
mine eyes were glad ;
I've ceased to cherish Thee ; I've ceased to utter
childlike praise ; and thus
Tanu, my mighty Lord, I'm lost ; the state, that
melting thinks on Thee,
By meannesses I've ceas'd to know ; 'twere shame
to me to see Thee come !'[2]

The excessive longing and love for God, that almost fanatical zeal to perceive His vision, is said to have dried up at the period of the Dark Night. It is incredible that it should be so, but still it is the poet's experience and as seen from his words.

During this period, Māṇikkavācakar laments on the total withdrawal of the transcendent vision, the lingering sense of I-hood, and 'the loss of the self's old passion'. According to Underhill

[1] Devout Musings : 5 P. 326.
[2] Devout Musings : 5 P. 326.
This sense of omission or guilt and oppression is as profound as Adam's after the Fall, as Milton presents it in his Paradise Lost :
'. . . . . .Cover me, ye pines !
Ye cedars, with innumerable boughs
Hide me, where I may never see them more !'
—*Book IX,*

one of these is usually dominant in the lives of mystics.[1] But in Māṇikkavācakar's life all these three aspects of the Dark Night are intertwined.

Not let us turn to the mental condition that developed from the second aspect of the spiritual darkness mentioned above.

Being conscious of his self-awareness (or Ātmabhōtam) the poet prays to God for forgiveness and begs of Him to appear before him.

'If cruel pain oppress from " deeds of old", guard Thou
Who ownest me ! If I, a man of " cruel deeds "
Suffer, from this my woe doth any gain accrue ?
O light of Umai's eyes, take Thou me for Thine own !
And though I err, ah ! should'st not Thou forgive,—
Thou on whose crest the crescent rests ? If I appeal,
Wilt Thou withhold Thy grace, Father, from me Thy slave ? [2]

When He appeared before him first his life was full of 'lapses'. 'Can't He be kind now', asks the poet.

'Thy mercy given to save one void of worth,
a dog like me, hath it this day pass'd all away ? '[3]

This prayer for forgivness and Grace takes a new turn here. He speaks of everything being caused by God's Will. First he criticised himself saying 'I have done wrong'. Now he says that God Himself made him forget His Grace by denying illumination and making him suffer physically with birth in this world.

'Bridegroom of Her with fawnlike eyes ! Our King ! If
Thou hast caused me Thine abiding glory to forget ;
If Thou hast thrust me out in fleshly form to dwell ;
if Thou hast caused Thy slave to wander here forlorn ;
Knowing Thy servant's ignorance, O gracious King,
when comes the day that Thou Thyself wilt show Thy grace ?
Ah ! When, I cry, when wilt Thou call me back to Thee ?[4]

[1] Mysticism : P. 387, 389.
[2] The Bruised Heart : 1 P. 273.
[3] *Ibid* : 3 P. 274.
[4] *Ibid* : 4 P. 274.

God permeates all the senses too and all his faculties. God comes as thought, feeling, emotion and imagination. Therefore, if the mind is confused or non-plussed and struggles without any sense of purpose or direction, it is also God's will. The core of the puzzle too is God. The problem and its solution have both the same source—God. The disease and the remedy are the same. Therefore, the poet prays for relief to God, who is Himself the cause of the mind's bondage.

> ' The tongue itself that cries to Thee,—all other powers
> of my whole being that cry out,—all are THYSELF !
>
> Thou art my way of strength ! The trembling thrill that runs
> through me is Thee ! THYSELF the whole of ill and weal !
>
> None other here ! Would one unfold and truly utter Thee
> what way to apprehend ? Thou Lord of Civa-world !
>
> And if I trembling fear, should'st Thou not comfort me ?[1]

Once the poet-saint realises that God's will is the core of all his thoughts and feelings, he concludes that God alone can put an end to his agony. Thus he cultivates complete resignation to His Will. This means the end of the sense of I-hood. There is no such thing as ' *my will* '—it is all God's Will. He had a similar spark of thought that flashed at the time of his initiation at Tirupperunturai. He recollects now how God made him a slave. What is it to be a slave of God ? He now understands that it is being utterly resigned to His Will. This is ' enslavement '. This is to acknowledge the Supreme mastery of God and consent to His Will. Māṇikkavācakar speaks of this resignation as follows :

> ' That very day my soul, my body, all to me
> pertaining, didst Thou not take as Thine own,
>
> . . . . when me Thou mad'st Thy slave ?[2]

Now he feels that his anguish, however intense, is not anything of his own, but it is caused by God's Will, since the body, mind and soul do not move except by His Will. Good or bad, all things are

[1] The Bruised Heart : 5 P. 275.
[2] *Ibid* : 7 P. 275.

caused by God. We can do nothing except to surrender ourselves to His Will. So he sings :

' Do Thou to me what's good alone, or do Thou ill,
To all resigned, I'am Thine and wholly Thine ![1]

This is accepting the Supreme sway of God as Master over the Soul of Man. How fruitless now appear all the so-called efforts of our own, in this world !

The poet further asks in the light of this new enlightenment ' O God, will you let me commune with you and know the Unitive Way of Life? Will you let me suffer in this world? But who am I to ask these question, argue or examine? What authority have I to do so? Has a slave any freedom of action or volition of his own? If I do so, I do not deserve to be called Thy slave. Pure love means total surrender to the exclusion of all other considerations.

' Me dog, and lower than a dog, all lovingly
Thyself didst take for Thine. This birth-illusion's thrall

Is plac'd within Thy charge alone. And I in sooth,
is there aught I need beyond that, with care search out ?

Herein is there authority at all with me ?
Thou may'st again consign me to some mortal frame ;

Or 'neath Thy jewelled foot may'st place me, Brow-eyed One ![2]

' Thou in Whose brow a central eye doth gleam ! Thy feet—
the twain—I saw ; mine eyes rejoic'd ; now, night and day,

Without a thought, on them alone I ponder still !
How I may quit this earthly frame, how I may come

To enter 'neath Thy feet in bliss, I ponder not !
Save Thee, O King, should I Thy servant ponder aught ?

Thy service here hath fulness of delight for me !'[3]

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[1] The Bruised Heart : 7 P. 276.
[2] *Ibid* : 8 P. 276.
[3] The Bruised Heart : 9 P. 276.

Thus the term 'enslavement' gains in connotation when applied to the poet-saint in his relation to God as Master. It means complete self-surrender on his part to God's Will.

Pure self-surrender or surrender of self-hood is not simply a mental condition, but a deep emotion felt at the core of one's being. This is, in fact, the one essential, preliminary condition, which results from 'the trials of the Dark Night'[1] and it is only the thoroughly detached, 'naughted soul' that is free to enjoy the Unitive Life, which is essentially a state of free and filial participation in Eternal Life.[2]

[1] Mysticism P 416.
[2] *bIid* : P. 416.

7. THE UNITIVE LIFE

The life of a mystic which begins with the awakening of the soul, passes through the two stages of Purgation and Illumination, crosses the biggest hurdle of the Dark Night and reaches the perennial enjoyment of communion with the Absolute. The Unitive Life means the commingling with the Absolute, which the mystics enjoy ultimately. It is a transcendental consciousness of the Absolute which cannot be rationally analysed or comprehended by the rest of mankind. Our reason is no yard-stick to measure the limitless depth and ineffable glory of the mystics' awareness of the Absolute in this case. However, the mystics themselves have indicated by means of familiar symbols and images in expression, what they have felt. As Underhill points out aptly, ' Here, then, as at so many other points in our study of the spiritual consciousness, we must rely for the greater part of our knowledge upon the direct testimony of the mystics, who alone can tell the character of that " more abundant life " which they enjoy.'[1] Underhill further says in this connection that a psychological approach to the subject of spiritual consciousness may be made with profit.

' From the point of view of the pure psychologist, what do the varied phenomena of the Unitive Life, taken together, seem to represent ? He would probably say that they indicate the final and successful establishment of that higher form of consciousness which has been struggling for supremacy during the whole of the Mystic way. The deepest, richest levels of human personality have now attained to light and freedom. The self is remade, trans-

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This chapter heading is also referred to as ' Unitive Way ' in the body of this thesis.

[1] Mysticism : P. 414.

formed, has at last unified itself; and with the cessation of stress, power has been liberated for new purposes.'[1]

Besides the psychological approach, we can understand something of Māṇikkavācakar's experience of this supreme Harmony—this Unitive Life—by making a study of some of his poems in Tiruvācakam.

While speaking of the mystics' enjoyment of the Unitive Life, Underhill speaks of two types of symbolic expressions by mystics.

1. The transcendent—metaphysical type and
2. The Intimate—personal type.

'Coming first to the evidence of the mystics themselves we find that in their attempts towards describing the Unitive Life they have recourse to two main forms of symbolic expression . . . . We find also, ... that these two forms of expression belong respectively to mystics of the transcendent—metaphysical and of the intimate—personal type: and that their formulae, if taken alone, appear to contradict one another.

1. The metaphysical mystic, for whom the Absolute is impersonal and transcendent, describes his final attainment of that Absolute as 'deification or the utter transmutation of the self in God'.

2. The mystic for whom intimate and personal communion has been the mode under which he best apprehended reality, speaks of the consummation of this communion, its perfect and permanent form, as the 'spiritual marriage' of his soul with God . . . . The language of 'deification' and of 'spiritual marriage', is related to subjective experience rather than to objective fact. It describes on the one hand the mystic's astonished recognition of a profound change effected in his own personality—the transmutation of his salt, sulphur, and mercury into spiritual Gold—on the other, the rapturous consummation of his love. Hence by a comparison of these symbolic reconstructions, by the discovery and isolation of the common factor latent in each, we may perhaps learn something of the fundamental fact which each is trying to portray'.[2]

[1] Mysticism : P. 416.
[2] Mysticism : P. 415.

In Māṇikkavācakar we find both these types of symbolic expressions. He uses both the symbols of Deification and of Spiritual Marriage. This point will be illustrated in detail later. Here we shall see why the poet uses both these symbolic expressions,

The enjoyment of the Unitive Life is a continuation of the experience of Illumination. Actually the former evolves from the latter, which, in turn, results from the 'Awakening of the Self'. The 'Awakening of the Self' means the consciousness of perceiving anew—the beginning of a new process of transcendence—which results in the shifting of the field of consciousness from the lower to the higher levels. The Illuminative way is a deeper awakening to the consciousness of the Absolute marked by a splendour and intensity. Both awakening and Illumination are pertaining to perception; however, it is only when the awakening grows to Illumination, that the bliss of the vision and the consequent physical and mental thrill grow limitless. The enjoyment of divine bliss is keener during the Illuminative stage.

The Unitive Life is a still further development of spiritual consciousness; it means total identification and complete communion with the vision enjoyed in the first two stages. As we have already mentioned, Māṇikkavācakar visualised the Absolute both in its immanent aspect and in its transcendental form. After passing through the Dark Night and the agonies thereof, the mind mellowed towards the Unitive Life, which Māṇikkavācakar expresses using both the language of Deification and that of Spiritual Marriage. Two illustrations are given below to prove this view :

1. *Language of deification* :

' From sinking in the vain abyss of worthless gods,—

From birth's illusions all,—the LIGHT SUPERNAL saved And made me His. Soon as the new, pure Light, was given How I in Bliss was lost : SING we, AND BEAT TEḶḶĒṆAM ![1]

' The mystic change for which the heav'ns are glad
will come ;—SHALL IT NOT BE,

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[1] The Tumour Song : 4 P. 153.

If He who cast the net,—the Woodman,—come, in
grace made manifest to me ?'[1]

2. *Language of 'Spiritual Marriage'* :

'I'll wear the flow'ry "cassia" wreath, and wearing join myself
To Civaṉ's mighty arm ; and joining cling in rapture lost ;
Then shrinking shall I melt with love of His red lip ;
I'll seek Him,—seeking I'll ponder Civaṉ's jewell'd foot ;
I'll faint and droop, and yet again revive. The ruddy foot
Of Him who dances there 'mid fire SING we! AMMĀṈĀY, SEE !'[2]

'Th' eternal Bridegroom, He in minds devout
Abides with perfect beauty crown'd ;
MOTHER !' SAITH SHE.

'In minds devout abides, the southern Lord,
Perun-turrai's Sire ; the Blissful ;
MOTHER ! ' SAITH SHE.[3]

If we study similar examples representing both the kinds of symbolic representations, we will be able to get at the basic idea of them all, that is to say—the core of Unitive Life enjoyed by Māṇikkavācakar.

The Defication :

At the end of the last chapter, we showed with evidences how Māṇikkavācakar got rid of his sense of I-hood. After he attained this level of spiritual progress, he went to Kaḷukkuṉṟam. There he sang :

'O Īcaṉ, Who the four and sixty demons mad'st
to share the eightfold qualities divine,—

When I had sunk in evil deeds,—the fruit
of triple foulness that confusion brings,—

Thou didst the bands of clinging sorrow loose ;
mad'st me Thine own ; gav'st me Thy feet's pure flower ;

[1] The Marshalling of the Sacred Host : 1 P. 342.
[2] The Ammāṇai : 7 P. 125.
[3] The Mother Decad : 3 P. 195.

In presence of Thy servant: band didst come
AND SHOW THYSELF UPON THE EAGLE'S HILL.'[1]

Here he refers to the great conversion of his soul, his release from the sense of I-hood—which has been caused by God's Grace. Here the expression 'gav'st me Thy Feet's pure Flower' is an expression symbolically representing this spiritual progress. The first verse in the Decad says, 'In a form unmeasured did'st Thou come'. Here God is referred to as 'The Absolute in its Transcendent Form'. This shows that this consciousness is heightened to the 'level of imageless and bare understanding'[2] (in Ruysbroeck's words) divested of the senses of I-hood. This is the transcendent vision that Māṇikkavācakar's soul perceived. This is what is meant by 'gav'st Thy Feet'.[3] This stage of spiritual communion is more sublime than the illuminative state : strictly speaking, it is a preliminary stage to the enjoyment of Unitive Life. The mystic's self-surrender already mentioned[4] is a sign of keen, extraordinary awareness, only an awareness of the soul of the soverignty of God as the only Master of the Universe. It is a wise, passive state of acceptance, but this too is only a preliminary to the spiritual consummation which the 'Unitive Life' stands for. Underhill explains the self-surrender of Ruysbroeck as follows :

'A humble receptivity, a meek self-naughting is with Ruysbroeck, as with all great mystics, the gate of the city of God.' In Ruysbroeck's own words , 'they abandon themselves to God in doing, in leaving undone and in suffering'.[5]

The fact that Māṇikkavācakar has attained this stage of self-abandonment was mentioned in the last chapter.

This preliminary awareness which Ruysbroeck calls 'imageless and bare understanding' is reflected by Māṇikkavācakar in the

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[1] The Eagle Mount : 7 P. 263.
[2] As quoted in 'Mysticism' by Underhill. P. 422.
[3] Even in the awakening of the soul, the poet-saint says that the first vision of the Holy Feet later evolved into the formless Flame and the personal Form of Civam as well. We can infer that the term 'Feet' is then a symbolic expression of God's transcendence. Even when we pray to attain his 'Feet' we usually mean His Grace.
[4] In the Chapter on 'The Dark Night of the Soul'.
[5] Mysticism. P. 422.

verse of the Decad on the Eagle Mount quoted above and also in the 'Tambour Song' quoted below :

'The Lord in Perun-turrai's ever-hallowed shrine
Who dwelt, my birth with all its germs destroyed ; since when
I've none else ; formless is He,—a form He wears,
The Lord of blest Arur SING WE, AND BEAT TEḶḶĒṆAM !'[1]

In the decad 'Mine eyes have seen' sung by him in Tillai he says that the Lord made a 'Civa' of him.

'In senses' power, sure cause of death, I erewhile 'wildered lay',—
Oft wrapt through realms of boundless space, then plunged in dismal hells !
He gave perception clear, made me all bliss,— made me His own !
I'VE TILLAI SEEN that holds the Gem, which endless rapture yields !'[2]

In the Decad of 'The Tambour Song', he sings

'Civaṉ unknown to Hari, Ayaṉ, Indra, heavenly ones,
On earth drew even me ; "come, come," said He, and made me His !
When imprint of His flow'ry Feet was on my head impressed,
How grace divine was mine, SING WE, AND BEAT TEḶḶĒṆAM !'[3]

In another song of the same decad, he says

'From sinking in the vain abyss of worthless gods,—
From birth's illusions all,—the LIGHT SUPERNAL saved
And made me His. Soon as the new, pure Light, was given
How I in Bliss was lost : SING we, AND BEAT TEḶḶĒṆAM !'[4]

The expressions, 'becoming Divine', 'becoming Civam' found in the above verses are suggestive of the language of deification.

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[1] The Tambour Song : 2 P. 153.
[2] Mine eyes have seen : 1 P. 264.
[3] The Tambour Song : 7 P. 154.
[4] *Ibid* : 4 P. 153.

Next, what exactly does this deification mean? It is interesting to quote Ruysbroeck in this connection : 'Yet the creature does not become God, for the union takes place in God through grace and our homeward-turning love ; and therefore the creature in its inward contemplation feels a distinction and an otherness between itself and God . . . . and this is the highest and finest distinction which we are able to feel.'[1] Underhill explains further as follows:

'The mystic of the impersonal type . . . . declares that he 'partakes directly of the Divine Nature, enjoys the fruition of reality. Since we "only behold that which we are", the doctrine of deification results naturally and logically from this claim. "Some may ask" says the author of the "Theologia Germanica", 'what is it to be a partaker of the Divine Nature, or a Godlike man? Answer : he who is imbued with or illuminated by the Eternal or Divine Light and inflamed or consumed with Eternal or Divine Love, he is a deified man and a partaker of the Divine Nature".'

'Deificatin is not, of course, a scientific term. It is a metaphor, an artistic expression which tries to hint at a transcendent fact utterly beyond the powers of human understanding.'[2]

Now let us study Māṇikkavācakar's mystic communion with God in the light of the statements quoted above.

Māṇikkavācakar signs not only of his having become 'Divine', but also of the Lord of Peruntuṟai being his 'very self'.

'Thee I know I need : and all I need I yet know not ;
Ah me ! our Araṉ, precious Balm, Ambrosia, Thou Whose Form is like
The crimson flower, Who dwell'st in sacred Perun-turrai's shrine,
And still remain'st, the very self within my soul ![3]

Rāmaliṅka Vaḷḷalār, a later mystic, says 'That' became 'I' and 'I' became 'That' thus losing duality.'[4] The poet-saint realises

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[1] Ruysbroeck, 'Samuel', Cap. XI (English Translation : The Book of Truth). As quoted by Underhill, Mysticism : P. 423.
[2] Mysticism : P. 418.
[3] My soul is consumed : 9. P. 281.
[4] Tiruvarutpa : Kīrttaṉaippakuti : Āṉantakkaḷippu : 9 : 9.

that his consciousness of self within and his consciousness of the Absolute do both point in the same direction. He indicates the unification of both the spirits, the divine and the human, by means of these expressions.

It may be seen that during all the various stages of the spiritual development beginning from conversion or initiation upto Unitive Life, the poet-saint speaks of his having been made a slave by divine grace. God holds his sway on his spirit. This means that there is throughout a higher sense of distinction between his self and the Absolute. This is confirmed by another song :

' What Thou hast GIVEN IS THEE ; and what hast gained is ME :
O Caṅkarā, who is the knowing one ?
I have obtained the rapturous bliss that knows no end ;
yet now, what one thing hast Thou gained from me ?[1]

This beautiful verse is couched in the language of deification. He says that God is not to gain out of him.** But if we think of the other statement that ' he himself became God ' then there may seem to be an inconsistency in the statement that ' one felt happy ' and ' the other did not feel it '. So we have to infer that it was Māṇikkacāvakar's feeling that the Absolute was distinct from his self. In Unitive Life, his self enjoys union with the Absolute ; enjoys the supreme bliss of communion in the state of harmony, but later ' it feels in its inward contemplation a distinction and otherness between itself and God '.[2] We find that these words of Ruysbroeck are fully applicable to Māṇikkavācakar. The spiritual communion with the Absolute, this spiritual metamorphosis is expressed in various ways by Māṇikkavācakar. Here is one more verse dealing with the same theme :

' From sinking in the vain abyss of worthless gods,—
From birth's illusions all,—the LIGHT SUPERNAL saved
And made me His. Soon as the new, pure Light, was given

[1] The Temple Lyric : 10 P. 224.
** We are reminded of Milton's Sonnet ' On his Blindness ' where he says
' God doth not need
Either man's work or His own gifts '.
[2] ' Samuel ', Cap. XI (English Translation : The Book of Truth) As quoted by Underhill, Mysticism. P. 423.

How I in Bliss was lost: SING we, AND BEAT TEḶḶĒṆAM !'[1]

Here the words, 'I was lost' are not to be interpreted as the total annihilation of self. They mean only the sense of I-hood is gone, and the human spirit remains as bare understanding. Now, the divine principle permeates through the core of the self, where the sense of I-hood once existed. Hence the words 'I was lost and was made Civam'. This can be inferred from the fine metaphor used to describe the poet's experience of Unitive Life. In 'The Maidens' Song of the Dawning' the poet signs,

'. . . . when the bright-eyed sun the darkness drives away,
the cool moon's rays are paled, the stars themselves depart.'[2]

The self and the Absolute are pitted against each other as the seer and the object seen, they came into close contact bridging the gulf, getting rid of the obstacles of attachments. The attachments recede and then fall off, like the darkness dispelled by the sunrise. Before the sun, the light of the moon and the stars fades away. The sources of the light are there but their presence is not felt, because of the dazzling sun. Similarly, before the radiance of the Absolute, when the self is purged of all attachments and ego, the human spirit is divested of the sense of I-hood and exists as bare understanding, suffused with Divine light. Here the metaphor of the Moon and the stars fading away explains how the Unitive Life does not mean total annihilation of self. This explanation of the metaphor is given here to serve as an apt background for his words 'my very self was lost' which could be taken to mean 'the sense of I-hood fades away'.

There is another passage also where the poet speaks of the same experience of Unitive Life :

'When He, Her spouse whose eyes shine bright, mixt with my soul,
And made me His, deeds and environments died out ;
Upon this earth confusion died ; all other mem'ries ceas'd ;
How all my "doings" died, SING WE, AND BEAT TEḶḶĒṆAM ![3]

[1] The Tambour Song : 4 P. 153.
[2] The Maidens' Song of the Dawning : 18 P. 115.
[3] The Tambour Song : 11 P. 156.

This song, it may be noted, begins with a reference to the Divine Grace visualized as mother.[1] The Divine Grace permeates the whole universe like deep love and elemental power. In the chapter on Illumination, Mother is spoken of as the symbol of Grace. When Māṇikkavācakar was aware of the Divine Grace or the Divine will, the energy or the activating force of all the worlds communed with his bare uplifted will. Ruysbroeck speaks of 'the commingling of wills' as follows :

'The bare uplifted will is transformed and drenched through by abysmal love, even as iron by fire.' This is union with the Absolute—the personal will commingling with the Divine.[2] Hence the words of Māṇikkavācakar which relate to the ceasing of consciousness of volition on his part are referred to as 'all my doings died'.

It is learnt that the Divine Grace appears as the Mother at the period of Illumination :

'How far away had I and all my thought
from Him the Loving Lord remained,

Had not the Wearer of the flowing lock,—
He with the Lady,—made me His !'[3]

Now that there is enjoyment of Unitive Life, the mingling of the Grace within is spoken of in the song :

'When He, Her spouse whose eyes shine bright,
mixt with my soul,
And made me His, deeds and environments died out ;
Upon this earth confusion died ; all other mem'ries ceas'd ;
How all my " doings " died,'[4]

Here too, there is reference to the Mother and he uses the term 'Mixed'. Since he believed in the ceasing of all his doings, we cannot infer that he ceased to do anything at all, except to meditate

[1] Mother-Goddess is called 'Kayal-māṇṭa kaṇṇi'. This means the Lady with fish-like eyes. Fishes are said to protect their eggs by sight and hatch them. Similarly the Goddess protects the people by Her Gracious Glance.

[2] Ruysbroeck, 'Samuel' Cap XI (English Translation : The Book of Truth) As quoted by Underhill, Mysticism. P. 422.

[3] The Humming Bee : 15 P. 149.

[4] The Tambour Song : 11 P. 156.

on God. We can only say that he became conscious now of the Divine Grace acting through him. This consciousness is called Grace-Realization. Rāmaliṅka Aṭikaḷār says that this is a preliminary stage in Unitive Life and that the next step is God-realization or the experience of Civam.[1]

When God's will or Grace activates the mystics' lives, their power grows boundless. The abundance of Divine Grace invests the mystics with an abundance of miraculous powers, when God infuses or informs the human will what is impossible? Accordingly Māṇikkavācakar sings

'My every power He fills with bliss superne, makes all life's works
Devotion true,— . . . .'[2]

These lines indicate the Unitive Life. At this period, as the innate powers grow abundantly, all his doings are said to be 'acts of holy penance' (tavam) a humble statement for the enjoyment of super-powers.

This new and growing power to act, this super-human energy to achieve even miracles is the direct result of communion with the Absolute or Unitive Life. Underhill gives many evidences of the mystics' miraculous powers. We shall look into this aspect of Unitive Life at the end of the chapter.

We have seen, so far, how the poet's Unitive Life was wrought and what was its process. The poet tries to comprehend the nature of the experience. Actually complete Unitive Life is the communion with the Absolute enjoyed by the three intimate factors of 'bare understandings, bare will and bare memory'. As Ruysbroeck puts it aptly while talking of deification 'the bare uplifted memory feels itself enwrapped and established in an abysmal Absence of Image'.[3]

The enjoyment of the bliss of Unitive Life was also at the conscious level, so far as Māṇikkavācakar is concerned. That is

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[1] Aruṭpā-Fourth Tirumurai : 9th poem, Verses 4 & 5.
[2] The Tōṇōkkam : 6 P. 185.
[1] Ruysbroeck, 'Samuel', Cap. XI (Eng. Translation : The Book of Truth As quoted by Underhill, Mysticism. P. 422.

why it was possible for him to sing of it in so many songs. The transcendental glory of God may be incomprehensive except at the superconscious or mystic level. But his spirit and his mind are both conscious of enjoying this Unitive Life. At the same time he is aware of a tremendous change, a change of state as it were without the sense of I-hood or, without his own mind or will. He says :

'In Him my body, soul, and thought, and mind were merged.'[1]

He sings in another song that God who has mingled with his self haunts his memory !

'And who am I would reach His foot ? To me, mere cur, a throne
He gave ; enter'd my flesh ; mixed with my life ; leaves not my soul.
With crown of honey-dripping-locks, blest Perun-turrai's Lord
On me a gracious boon bestow'd, that heavenly ones know not !'[2]

How does he express the supreme bliss he had in the Unitive Life ? He speaks of the inner joy through well-known metaphors or images.

'The Lord of sacred TURUTTI, I, currish slave, with joy
HAVE SEEN IN TILLAI'S FANE ADORNED, the sweet and blissful seat'[3]

'His Presence mingled in my body, soul, and thought ;
As honey, rare ambrosia, every choicest sweet
He gave His grace, in ways the heavenly ones know not :'[4]

'Him who is savour rich of every fruit ;'[5]

The supreme bliss caused by the enjoyment of Unitive Life is actually beyond words. The use of the well-known metaphors is only an under-estimation of the real nature of the bliss. Honey,

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[1] The Tambour Song : 18 P. 158.
[2] My soul is consumed : 2 P. 278.
[3] Mine eyes have seen : 3 P. 265.
[4] The Ammāṉai : 16 P. 125.
[5] The Gold Dust : 15 P. 136.

Nectar, Sugar, Fruit—all these have only qualified sweetness. But his was a 'Delight transcending praise'.[1] It is said to be 'bliss, of qualities devoid'.[2] Sometimes, mental joy itself is beyond expression. What then can be said of the intensity of spiritual joy, born of direct apprhension of the Absolute (in its transcendence)! This bliss too is transcendent. It is subtle, subtle beyond all the subtlest expressions of poetry.

The bliss of Unitive Life was thus felt by the mind and yet beyond it. The Absolute remains constantly in his consciousness now. During the purgative period, the Absolute played hide and seek as it were, now within reach and now beyond. During the Dark Night of the soul, the Absolute was unperceived for long. But now, at this stage of the enjoyment of Unitive Life, the Absolute remains constantly within. Hence the poet sings now:

> '. . . . . . To me, mere cur, a throne
> He gave; enter'd my flesh; mixed with my life;
> leaves not my soul.'[3]

In the Decad called 'The Decad of the Tenacious Grasp' he says

> '. . . I'VE SEIZ'D THEE,—HOLD THEE FAST!'[4]

He again says that he caught hold of Him 'firmly in the dark'.

> 'IN EACH DARK HOUR—I've SEIZ'D THEE,—. .'[5]

We can interpret the last statement in two ways:

1. The Absolute in its Transcendent aspect is formless, attributeless and dark as space. He apprehended and grasped the Divine.

2. The poet grasped the Absolute as a panacea of all the ills of the Dark Night suffered by his self earlier.

The bliss born of the Unitive Life caused his mind to melt. The deep power of spiritual joy is reflected in the mind and this joy of communion is said to be torrential.

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[1] The Decad of the Tenacious Grasp: 4 P. 293.
[2] The Temple Lyric: 4 P. 221.
[3] My soul is consumed: 2 P. 278.
[4] The Decad of the Tenacious Grasp: 4 P. 293 (last line of all the verses)
[5] *Ibid.*

'As torrents burst their bounds, Thou rushest through my soul !'[1]

The poet's mind becomes strong enough to bear this torrential joy.

As the mind melts in joy, the god-love increases in intensity. In fact, it is a maddening joy he feels now in Unitive Life.

'I know myself no more ; nor day's nor night's
recurrence ; He
Who mind and spech transcends with mystic
madness madden'd me ;
He owns the angry mighty Bull,—blest Perun-turrai's Lord,
The Brahman used to me wiles I know not,—O Beam divine!'[2]

We know that he had longed for God at the period of purgation; roaming everywhere, like a mad man :

'Transcendent Good ! Owner and Sire ! Thy servant
melting thinks on Thee ;
In raptures meet I utter forth my fever'd soul's
ecstatic joys,
Still wandering from town to town ; while men cry out,
'A madman this ;'
And each one speaks, with mind distraught, discordant
words. O, when comes death ?'[3]

And during the period of his Unitive Life, his maddening pursuits are richly rewarded with maddening joy. It makes him totally oblivious of all the happenings around him. It makes him oblivious of the day, oblivious of the night, of men and matters. He is dead to the external world, though he lived a full life inwardly. This paradox is put in his words :

'O King of those above !—O ceaseless Plenitude
of mystic bliss !—To me defiled Thou cam'st,
Fruit newly ripe, and mad'st me Thine own dwelling-place.
Balm, yielding bliss all earthly bliss beyond !'[4]

[1] The Temple Lyric : 5 P. 221.
[2] My soul is consumed : 3 P. 279.
[3] The Sacred Cento : 3 P. 45.
[4] The Decad of the Tenacious Grasp : 1 P. 291.

His indifference to physical life weakened his body, but the joy felt within caused a reaction all over the body as well. He felt as though his muscles and bones too melted. He sings :

> ' Father ! not soul alone but body too,
> Thou enterest melting, and with sweetness fill'st each pore.'[1]
>
> ' Then sweetest rapture's honey ever flows,
> till all our frame in bliss dissolves !
>
> To Him alone, the mystic Dancer, go ;
> AND BREATHE HIS PRAISE, THOU HUMMING-BEE ! '[2]

This is more than mere feeling. It is a physical change, a powerful impact on the body actually experienced by the poet-saint, at this period of Unitive Life. There are many more evidences to establish the fact, a few of which are quoted below :

In the poem ' The Universe ', there is a place where he first refers to the body as ' the body of decay ' and then as ' the body that melts '.[3]

Moreover he says,

> ' . . . . . 'Twas then through all my limbs
> A honied sweetness He infused, and made me blest.'[4]
>
> ' Ambrosial drops most marvellous
> He caused throughout my being to distil.'[5]
>
> ' With tender soul, as though He'd make me as Himself,
> He formed for me a frame where grace might flow.'[6]

Thus the Absolute mingles with his body, mind and soul. It is complete union. He refers to this enjoyment of the Unitive Life thus :

> ' His Presence mingled in my body, soul, and thought ; '[7]

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1 The Temple Lyric : 3 P. 220.
2 The Humming Bee : 3 P. 140.
3 The Universe : Lines 118 & 120 P. 25-26.
4 *Ibid* : Lines 156, 157, P. 28.
5 The Universe : Lines 174, 175 P. 29.
6 *Ibid* : Lines 176, 177 P. 29.
7 The Ammaṉāi : 16 P. 125.

Thus besides ' bare understanding ', ' bare will ' and ' bare memory ' suffused with the Absolute, the body too mingles with Divinity, as it happens in the case of Māṇikkavācakar.

Deification means only this all pervasive power of God's Grace, manifested in the body, mind and soul of the mystic, as already quoted from Theologia Germanica.[1] Māṇikkavācakar felt the same divinity permeating all through him. He says :

' With mighty fire of grace our humble dwellings
He destroyed that none were left.'[2]

This awareness of ' feeling absolutely humble ' or ' submerged in the Absolute ',—is the crux of the Unitive Life as realised by Māṇikkavācakar.

The Spiritual Marriage :

It is examined here how the poet apprehends the Absolute in its personal Form and how he mingled with Him. The enjoyment of the communion with the Absolute is felt as ' spiritual marriage of the soul with God '.

It may be mentioned here that Māṇikkavācakar composed a separate work called Tirukkōvaiyār, which speaks of the Unitive Life throughout in terms of spiritual marriage. The poet speaks here of his spiritual experiences in accordance with the traditional love-poetry of the ancient classical literature of the Tamils.

He makes use of as many as four hundred aspects of the traditional love-theme, to fully expose his experience of the supreme bliss symbolically. Perhaps this may be the reason why symbols of spiritual marriage in Tiruvācakam are not quite so many.

G. Vaṉmīkanātaṉ, in his recent book on Tiruvācakam sets apart sixteen poems beginning with, ' The Maidens ' Song of the Dawning ' and ending with ' The Temple Lyric ' as dealing with the illuminative knowledge of God gained by Māṇikkavācakar and as couched in the Language of Spiritual Marriage.[3]

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[1] Theologia Germanica as quoted by Underhill - Mysticism P. 418— ' Some may ask, says the authore of the Theologia Germanica. . . He is a deified man and a partaker of the Divine nature'.

[2] The Universe : Line 160, 161 P. 28.

[3] ' Pathway to God ' : P. 43.

Apart from those mentioned by Vaṉmīkaṉātaṉ, the poems, 'The Sacred Pāṇḍi' and 'The Head Decad' also contain a few verses expressed in the similar strain.

Dr. Dorai Rangaswamy, while stating that the 'Bhōga mārga', (bridal mysticism) is not unknown to Saivites, suggests that Māṇikkavṣcakar may as well be renamed as 'Māṇikkavācaka Nāyaki' just as some Vaisnavite saints are called, 'Parāṅkusa Nāyaki', 'Saṭhakōpa Nāyaki', etc.[1]

It may be noted that Navaneethakriṣṇa Bhārathiyār, a commentator of Tiruvācakam is of the conviction that the whole of Tiruvācakam was sung in the strain of bridal mysticism.[2] Though this commentator has laboured much throughout his commentary to substantiate his view, a student has to be cautious against coming to hasty conclusions and it is hoped that further study will throw much light on this question.

The poems couched in the language of spiritual marriage may now be examined.

The poet speaks of the personal aspect of the Absolute in all these poems. It is only the apprehension of the Absolute in its personel aspect that leads to the fervid spiritual love. The mind is more inclined towards contemplation on the personal form of Divinity. Under 'Illumination', we saw that Māṇikkavācakar worshipped Civam in His personal form. The Unitive Life is nothing but identification with the Form of Civam in one sense. One becomes what one beholds. Therefore it is, that the poet-saint sings of his spontaneous love for the Lord that sprang in him, the moment he perceived His Form. His love and longing is for His Form. As self-forgetfulness is one aspect of growing love, he speaks of his own self-forgetfulness.

> 'Ye who a soul possess that swims and bathes in rapture's rushing tide !
>
> A Pāṇḍi-king, He mounts His steed, to make all earth the gladness share.

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[1] 'The Religion and Philosophy of Tēvāram' Bk. II, p. 1245.
[2] Tiruvācakam : Arāicci-p-pērurai : Commentator's Introduction P. X.

He takes the form of flood of joy unique, and holds
His servants' hearts.

Plunging in flood of heavenly bliss, O cherish ye His
sacred Foot ! '[1]

Here he speaks of the king who came riding on horseback. Next he speaks of the women who saw the Lord thus coming, lost their hearts to him in love, and stood speechless in utter forgetfulness !

' That men may cross the mingling sea of evil DEEDS
and future BIRTH,

The Pāṇḍi-king supreme, Who melts the soul of those
that love and praise,

Upon His charger came. When this the slender flower-like
maidens knew,

Like trees they stood,—their senses rapt, themselves
forgot, and all beside ! '[2]

Forgetting or losing oneself in love, being unmindful of food or drink, melting in earnest longing for the sight of the lover and turning pale and reduced, are all the usual characteristics of love-lorn maids. The maids who are in love with God in His personal Form are similarly suffering from the pangs of separation. Their bangles are said to slip off their tinned forearms, but they are not aware of this mishap. It is traditional for Tamil poets to sing that the lover himself who causes the self-forgetfullness, has stolen away the bangles—a pretty poetic fancy. Māṇikkavācakar too charges the Lord of having ' stolen the maidens' bangles'.

' Ye maids, the Lord whose eye looked on me sweetly,
claiming service due ;

The Warrior-lord, in Perun-turrai girt with
cocoa-groves Who dwells ;

Who takes the maidens' armlets bright, and claims
our soul and service true.

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[1] The Sacred Pāṇḍi : 3 P. 288.
[2] *Ibid* : 9 P. 290.

UPON HIS ROSEATE FOOT'S EXPANDING FLOWER OUR
HEADS SHALL GLEAMING REST !'[1]

He imagines himself to be one of the love-lorn maidens and says that He has stolen away the bangles of others, but so far as the poet is concerned, He has stolen away his very heart, thereby expressing the fact that he is maddened with love more than others.

The complete loss of the sense of I-hood and self-naughting or complete abandonment of the self, are thus expressed in the language of human love, to enable us to understand the fervour and depth of spiritual love.

When the Lord appeared as a King on horseback, he was besmeared with the sacred ashes, and wore beauteous white clothes. He has captivated me in that charming Form, says the poet in another Decad.

'White is His steed, and white His shaven head ;
He wears the sleeper's mystic dress,
MOTHER !' SAITH SHE.

'Wearing the sleeper's dress, a prancing steed
He rides, and steals away my soul,
MOTHER !' SAITH SHE.'[2]

In another verse of the same Decad, God is described as 'The Eternal Bridegroom' who dwells in the poet's heart.

'Th' eternal Bridegroom, He in minds devout
Abides with perfect beauty crown'd ;
MOTHER !' SAITH SHE.

'In minds devout abides, the southern Lord,
Perun-turrai's Sire ; the Blissful ;
MOTHER !' SAITH SHE.[3]

He describes him as the eternal source of joy as a reflection of the exceeding joy he experienced in the union. The very thought of the

[1] The Head Decad : 3 P. 315.
[2] The Mother Decad : 7 P. 196.
[3] *Ibid* : 3 P. 195.

Lord and the memory of communion with Him melt his mind and body. His mind is said to melt into tears that well up in his eyes.

' cassia, the moon, the VILVA flower, and wild
Phrenzies crowd thick His head,
MOTHER ! ' SAITH SHE.

'The VILVA flower that crowns His sacred brow
Wild phrenzy bringeth me to-day,
MOTHER ! ' SAITH SHE.[1]

The poet turns mad, in love of the Lord, who bewitches him, wearing the ' konṟai ' wreath and crescent moon and the vilva flower.

' The Maidens' Song of the Dawning ' may be considered to be a love lyric like the Mother Decad and the Kuyil Decad. Navaneethakrishna Bharathiyar, one of the commentators of Tiruvācakam says, ' in olden days, the maids used to sing and observe the ritual of ' Pāvai Nōṉpu ' to obtain good husbands. Later Āṇṭāḷ and Māṇikkavācakar sang ' the Tiruppāvai ' and ' the Tiruvempāvai ' in their spiritual ecstasy to commune with Lord Krishna and Civa respectively.[2]

Māṇikkavācakar speaks of his mystic experience as the bliss of communion with God Himself. He symbolises himself as the love-lorn maid, engaged in all the rituals in the month of Mārkaḷi. He makes use of these rituals to symbolise his love for the Lord If spiritual marriage itself is a symbol, the rites and rituals of the ' Nōṉpu ' become symbolic of the symbol of spiritual marriage. But Prof. P. N. Srinivasachariyar draws a subtle contrast between ' the Tiruppāvai ' and ' the Tiruvempāvai ' in his book ' Mystics and Mysticism '. He says that ' Tiruvempāvai belongs to devotional mysticism and Tiruppāvai to the bridal type. '[3] However there are some verses in ' the Tiruvempāvai ' also, which can be taken to belong to the type of bridal mysticism. In fact, all the verses here are supposed to be sung by maids and refer to a particular maid. One of the verses refers to her God-love.

' With gladsome mind, while tears in ceaseless stream flowed forth.

[1] *Ibid* : 10 P. 197.
[2] Navaneethakrishna Bharatiar's Commentary : P. 457-458.
[3] Mystics & Mysticism : P. 330.

Once on a time, this woman came to earth, nor bowed

Before the heavenly ones,—by the great King with frenzy filled.'[1]

The maid who is referred to in all the verses may be taken to be the heroine of the entire Tiruvempāvai. Although some commentators are of opinion that a different maid is addressed in each verse, Navaneethakrishna Bharathiyar's commentary supposes that one and the same heroine is addressed in all the poems. He says that the heroine alone is admonished in all verses by her companions.[2]

Ratna Navaratnam also, in her book on Tiruvācakam subscribes to the view that the maid who is apostrophised as the sleeping one in the house is the same person throughout and that she symbolically represents the poet-saint.[3]

When the heroine was together with her companions the previous evening, they told her that they would reach her house before sunrise and wake her up the next day, since the bathing ritual of Mārkaḷi commences that day. The heroine replies that there would be no need for them to do so, since she is sure of waking them up earlier than they. But the next morning, she does not care to rise early, nor does she get up from the bed at the maids' calls. Thus starts Tiruvempāvai.

The maids indulge in impassioned expressions of love and bathe in the waters. This reminds us of the Rasalīla, described in the Bhāgavata. But, when deeply examined, Tiruvempāvai, the heroine alone is supposed to be intoxicated with God-love and the other maids only speak of it. The maids only long for attaining the disciples of Civa as their husbands, while the heroine is said to yearn for union with Civa Himself. This is clear when

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1 The Maidens' Song of the Dawning : 15 P. 112-113.

2 Navaneethakrishna Bharatiyar's commentary : P. 466.

3 ' We can almost hear the languid sighs of the poet as he speaks through the lips of the young maid from inside, and tells his friends that he is still a novice, whereas they are His most faithful saints. The poet had bewailed many a time that he was left behind because of his immaturity, whereas all the other devotees had followed the God-Guru '

—The Hindu Testament of Love
—P. 139.

the maids address the heroine as a separate individual and refer to her God-Love.

'. . . . . this woman came to earth, nor bowed

Before the heavenly ones,—by the great King
with frenzy filled.
Who like to her ?'[1]

Here the heroine is taken to be unique in her love of the Lord Himself. But in another song the maids, distinguishing themselves from the heroine, pray for the disciples to be their 'wedded lords'.

'Thy worshippers devout, who've gained Thee
for their Lord,
adore Thy servants' feet,—to them give reverence due.—
And these alone shall be our wedded lords ;'[2]

In the Rasalīla everyone of the maids is suffused with Krisnaprēma—love of Krisna—and attain union with Him.[3] But in the Tiruvempāvai only one of the maids i.e. the heroine alone is melting in love of Civa. Therefore, all the verses in Tiruvempāvai where only one is apostrophised may be taken to refer to a particular maid, i.e. the heroine alone. To quote a few more,

'The Splendour rare and great, that knows nor first nor end,
we sing ; Thou hear'st the song, yet still sleep'st on ;

O lady of the large bright eye ! is thine ear dull
that it perceives not sound of praise that hails

The great God's cinctured feet ?—She hears the strain resound
through all the street, yet in forgetful sleep

On her flower-couch she muttering turns !—

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[1] The Maidens' Song of the Dawning : 15 P. 112-113.
[2] *Ibid* : 9 P. 108-109.
[3] Prof. P. N. Srinivasachariar writes the following on Rasalila :
'The artless Gōpis alone in the village heard the Divine call and were drawn irresistibly by the meolody, rushed to the charmed spot and were lost in the ecstatic Rāsa dance. Each Gōpi was a note in the divine flute. It was a circular rhythmic dance in which each Gōpi, a queen of the fairy land of Krisnamaya was supported by Sri Krisna ; there were as many Krisnas as there were Gōpis and in the rapture of this Rāsa dance, the sense of separateness or self-feeling which keeps each soul at arm's length was completely swept away.'

—Mystics & Mysticism. P. 308.

See, here she nothing noting lies ! Why thus, why thus ?
doth this our friend beseem ?—OUR LADY FAIR, ARISE ![1]

' O thou whose smile as pearl is bright, arise, present
thyself before the Sire, the blissful One, th' Ambrosial,

And with o'erflowing sweetness speak ! Come, ope they doors !

' Ye men devout, the Ruler's ancient saints, ye reverend men,

Will't be amiss if ye our weakness aid, us novices admit ?'
No cheat is this, know we not all Thy wonderous love ?[2]

' Hearing His signals, ope thy mouth, and " Civaṉ ' cry,
Cry " Southern-One ". Like wax before the fire
Melting,— '[3]

Of these, the first verse speaks of the heroine's indifference since she is sleeping, unmindful of the songs in praise of the Lord.

The other poems bring out the depth of her love for God in moving rhythms. Thus Māṇikkavācakar depicts the heroine alone, as intoxicated with love for God, while he makes rest of the maids her companions. The symbol gains in richness when the heroine is identified with the poet's self, longing for union with God.[4]

The supreme bliss of spiritual communion with God is symbolically represented as the joy of a woman bathing in a pond. The poet makes her express her joy of communion with the Lord, indirectly as follows :

' This swelling tank is like our Queen and King !
We ent'ring plunge and plunge again, ...
. . . . our bosoms throb with joy ;
The wave we plunge in swells. . . . . '[5]

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[1] The Maidens' Song of the Dawning : 1 P. 104.
[2] *Ibid* : 3 P. 105.
[3] *Ibid* : 7 P. 107-108.
[4] The basic concept of the Tiruvempāvai can be compared with C.P.E. Spurgeon's words :
' God is conceived as the great masculine positive force, the soul the great feminine or receptive force, and the meeting of these two, the " mystic rapture " of the marriage of Divinity and Humanity as the source of all life and joy —.
[5] The Maidens' Song of the Dawning : 13 P. 110-111.

The body is refreshed while bathing. It radiates with a new beauty. The waters rise and fall in billows as the ladies plunger into them. The lady uses the situation of bathing in a tank as a symbol to express her spiritual love and joy. Her heart throbs with joy. Divine love too grows more and more like a flood. The tank is symbolically represented here as the Lord and His Divine consort, with the mystic vision of Civa with Shakti, as mentioned in the earlier chapters. The Absolute responds in joy as much as the poet-saint receives joy. How elegant is the significance of Union brought out in this metaphor ! The maiden speaks here to her companions—all women—and naturally, she speaks of her communion with God in suggestive terms.

All the twenty verses of Tiruvempāvai verses, are love-lyrics which can be classified as follows :

1. *The first five songs* :

Since the heroine wants to conceal her love, she appears to be unwilling to reach the 'meeting place' (venue). Her maid, however persuades her to go to the 'meeting place' under some other guise. Here the heroine pretends to lie asleep as though unwilling to reach the place, where her lord—the God—waits for her. Many of her maids persuade her, bringing about the necessity to worship God.

2. *Songs* 6, 7, 8 :

The companions tease her for her apparent indifference.

3. *Songs* 9, 10, 11 :

These are all songs speaking of the glorious of the hero—the Lord.

4. *Songs* 12, 13, 14 :

These deal with the union. Here the actual ritual of bathing is described. The act of bathing symbolises the act of union with God.[1]

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[1] According to Vaiṣnava cult also this, is true. It is called 'Samslēṣnaṃ' (Aṇṇaṅkarāchāriār's commentary of Tiruppāvai).

5. *Song* 15.

The maids speak among themselves of the heroine's deep passion for the Lord.

6. *Songs* 16, 17 18.

The maids speak of the Lord's Grace and His kindness.

7. *Song* 19.

Expresses again the longing for union.

8. *Song* 20.

The Lord is hailed.

There is also another philosophic interpretation of the Tiruvempāvai, which may be briefly noted here. The maids are said to stand for the nine energies or Shaktis. When they wake up and move one another, they are said to symbolise the principle of evolution ; God's Grace impelling them all to act.[1]

As Ratna Navaratnam points out ' this is no doubt an ingenious interpretation in line with the philosophic import of Saiva Siddhanta, but much of the spontaneous poetry gets overwroght under the weight of this philosophical approach '.[2]

In another song, a lady plays ' Ammāṉai ' with her friend. She speaks of her spiritual communion with the Lord, openly to her friend. There is no trace of shyness about her, because the lady she speaks to is her intimate friend. She tells of her experiences. She says that she pretended ' a feigned anger ' to her lover when he came, wore his wreaths, embraced him, melted in love and lost in the ecstasy of divine union.

' I'll wear the flow'ry " cassias " wreath, and wearing
join myself
To Civaṉ's mighty arm ; and joining cling in rapture lost ;
Then shrinking shall I melt with love of His red lip ;
I'll seek Him,—seeking I'll ponder Civaṉ's jewell'd foot ;
I'll faint and droop, and yet again revive. The ruddy foot
Of Him who dances there 'mid fire SING we ! AMMĀNĀY,
SEE ! '[3]

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[1] Civa Aruṉakiri Mutaliār, His edition of Tiruvācakam, 1927.
[2] Tiruvācakam : The Hindu Testament of Love : P. 139.
[3] The Ammāṉai : 17 P. 125.

The poet uses the term 'shrinking'—a typical expression to make us realize that even in the unitive stage of blissful adoration, there could be a slightest interval of separation at times. 'I shall shrink from Him' or 'I shall court a feigned anger' is a typical expression of the woman in love. It is her prerogative. But it is not opposed to love. On the contrary, it is something which inflames it and increases the intensity of love. Similarly, in the blissful unitive state, even though the soul has shed its sense of I-hood, it dons it again for a moment, and 'stands aloof' or 'shrinks' from the Absolute awhile. This is conveyed to us in the language of the worldly lovers as the bride 'shrinking away from the lover'. The 'shrinking' soul willingly suffers the agonies of this short separation, in order that the bliss might be greater at the period of re-union with the Absolute. The fact that this 'shrinking away' only kindles God-love is indicated by the poet's words :

'I was longing for a kiss from His ruddy lips and was having a hazy inner fear that He might leave me. But no, later I was lost in the ecstasy of divine union '.[1]

At this period, Māṇikkavācakar's mind does not stray away from thoughts of Divinity, though at times there be no mystic communion. His memory is soaked in God. He wants to listen to his various names. He can as well call Him by His names ; however, he finds a peculiar pleasure in listening to others talk of his own dear Master, like a love-lorn lady. It is traditional for a lady in love thus to ask her pets of parrots or koel to repeat the name of her lover in his absence.

'Him the fair sevenfold world extols,—since every being's form is His ;—
In southern sea-girt Laṅka He, the Lord Who Perun-turrai owns,
Vaṇḍōthari the beautiful, made glad with His abounding grace !
KUYIL, the southern Pandi Chief, CALL HITHER with thy voice divine ! '[1]

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[1] *Ibid* : 17 P 125.
[2] The Kuyil Decad : 2 P. 199.

Here Māṇikkavācakar identifies himself as a lady, asking the Koel to call the Lord. In fact, there is one whole decad devoted to this theme.

The bird is to call the One who comes riding on horseback.

'. . . the Blissful-God came down from heaven,
And on the goodly charger rode like jewel set in ruddy gold.
KUYIL, 'mid branches twittering, Gokari's Lord GO,
CALL TO COME ![1]

He is the one and only source of all his feelings.

'The Only-One, despised the flesh, entered my soul,
and fills my thought ;—[2]

The lover, the Delightful one gives ambrosial bliss.

'KUYIL, glad pleasure give I Thee ! the sevenfold
worlds He rules ;—
The Loving-One ambrosia gives ;— '[3]

This is one device used to repeat the various names of the Lord, for His names are legion. Māṇikkavācakar makes the maid long for the warrior on horseback, expressing how He gave supreme bliss by communing with her and how her mind is filled with the sweet memory of the communion.

Besides the Kuyil Decad, Māṇikkavācakar has also composed many more poems using the theme of 'spiritual marriage'. Of these the decads on 'The Gold Dust', 'The Lilies', 'The Humming Bee', 'The Golden Swing' are worth mentioning. The poetic forms express the cravings and rapsodies of maids in love.

'The Gold Dust' means the scented powder used for bathing. This Decad is sung as the words of a maiden, pounding the sacred dust, to another. She is in love and she finds pleasure in talking about her lover and his love to her friends. She must give a warm welcome to her Lord when He arrives ; so she is making elaborate preparations to receive Him. As soon as He comes He must have a bath. So, the scented bathing powder has to be ready and she

[1] *Ibid* : 6 P. 200.
[2] *Ibid* : 4 P. 199.
[3] The Kuyil Decad : 6 P. 200.

is all haste preparing it. Here Māṇikkavācakar in his intense realization of the merging of the soul in rapture, personified himself as a Lady, making hasty preparations to receive her lover.[1]

Having received the Lover, she must now make lovely wreaths and garlands for Him. In the Decad 'The Lilies' she sings of gathering flowers for making garlands for Him. She sings :

'A beauteous Light He shone, softened my heart,
and made me His !

Sing how those jewell'd Feet are gold, AND PLUCK
THE LILY-FLOWERS !'[2]

Again, when the Lord and she wander happily along the fragrant, shady groves, the bees hum pleasantly near. In the Decad of 'The Humming Bee' the poet makes the bride talk to the bee about her love for the Lord and its raptures. Here the soul is really addressed and told 'that all sweetness is in Him. The ecstatic experience of the Lord is depicted by Māṇikkavācakar in the poem as :

'Whene'er we think on Him, whene'er we see,
whene'er of Him our lips converse,

Then sweetest rapture's honey ever flows,
till all our frame in bliss dissolves !

To Him alone, the mystic Dancer, go ;
AND BREATHE HIS PRAISE, THOU HUMMING-
BEE !'[3]

Again Māṇikkavācakar identifies himself as the bride, who placed her lover on a golden swing rocking it gently and thus enjoy the bewitching ratpure of His Love. Then she sits with Him and swings on. This surpassing Bliss is expressed in the Decad 'The Golden Swing'. This decad is depicted as follows : The heroine is seated along with her companions on a golden swing in a ravishing garden and swings in ecstasy. As they swing she sings in joy about the glory of her lover, the Lord.

[1] The Gold Dust.
[2] The Lilies : 9 P. 171.
[3] The Humming Bee : 3 P. 140.

'Let precious corals be the posts, (of the swing),
let strung pearls be the ropes, let pure gold be
the beauteous seats—of this sacred golden swing',

says the poet.

'Let us mount the swing and sweelty sing of the
ambrosial sweetness of His grace and His holy
praises; ye, guileless, bright-eyed ones,
move we the Golden Swing.'[1]

sings the poet.

Thus the Unitive Life made Māṇikkavācakar imagine himself as a lady in love and in communion with Her Lord. This identification was complete in its feelings and emotions, that he composed Tiruvempāvai (The Maidens' Song of the Dawning) which in some places is a typical revelation of a woman's love. It is this mental identification that makes him describe all their pastimes truthfully—such as 'Cāḷal'. 'Unti', 'Tōṇōkkam' etc. Each of these games is described in a separate decad and it is a woman who is a heroine in each of these poems. In fact, there is no other poet, who has sung in such detail of all the games and sports of women. It was the sheer force of imaginative sympathy that made him speak like a woman. But it may be remembered that the human soul has ever been envisaged in many religions as the female principle longing for union with God—the Male principle.

Now that we have examined Māṇikkavācakar's experience of Unitive Life and the symbols of deification and of spiritual marriage, we can compare his mystic consciousness of God in his personal and transcendent aspects. We find that there are certain factors common to both kinds of experience of divine apprehension. They are as follows:

1. The loss of the sense of I-hood.
2. God and the soul becoming unified in spirit.
3. The essential distinction between the individual soul and the Absolute.
4. The growing love of the soul for God and vice-versa.

[1] The Golden Swing: 1 P. 190 Pope's translation differs here.

A study has been made of Māṇikkavācakar's communion with the Absolute. This is an important aspect of his Unitive Life. When he sings,

> ' My every power He fills with bliss superne,
> makes all life's works
> Devotion true,—.'[1]

He is referring to another aspect of his Unitive Life. It is the tremendous or amazing energy evinced in all his actions, after his mind became one with Civam. All his actions were 'devotion true'—acts revealing extra-ordinary inner power.

It is already stated that his communion with the Divine Grace impelled the poet to act in harmony with the Divine will. The Divine grace flowing within endows him with superb powers of action. Hence the words :

> ' My every power He fills with bliss superne,
> makes all life's works
> Devotion true,— . .'

Underhill refers to the same amazing vitality of mystics, attained at this unitive stage. She says :

'The mystic way has been a progress, a growth, in love ; deliberate fostering of the inward tendency of the soul towards its source, an eradication of its disorderly tendencies to 'temporal goods'. But the proper end of love is union : 'a perfect uniting and coupling together of the lover and the loved into one'. It is a 'unifying principle', the philosophers say ; life's mightiest agent upon every plane. Moreover, just as earthly marriage is understood by the moral sense, less, as a satisfaction of personal desire, than as a part of the great process of life—the fusion of two selves for new purposes—so much spiritual marriage brings with it duties and obligations. With the attainment of a new order, the new infusion of vitality, comes a new responsibility, the call to effort and endurance on a new and mighty scale. It is not an act but a state. Fresh life is imparted, by which our lives are made complete : new creative powers are conferred. The self, lifted to the divine order, is to be an agent of the divine fecundity : an energizing

[1] The Tōṇōkkam : 6 P. 185.

centre, a parent of transcendental life . . . . we find as a matter of fact, when we come to study the history of the mystics, that the permanent unitive state, or spiritual marriage, does mean for those who attain to it, above all else such an access of creative vitality'.[1]

Underhill further illustrates this divine fecundity and energy from the lives of devotees and mystics such as St. Paul, St. John of Arc, St. Francis, St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Teresa, Madame Guyon and so on. Their tremendous powers of endurance and miraculous doings are traced back to divine power, an energizing centre. Accordingly, we find that Māṇikkavācakar too speaks of the Cittis or miraculous powers he received.

'Innumerous mystic powers my soul shall then possess ;'[2]

The outburst of energy after the achievement of unitive way takes the shape of Tiruvācakam which is the 'spiritual autobiography' of the saint recollected in tranquillity and dictated according to tradition to the Lord of Tillai for being written. Nothing greater or more powerful can be imagined by saints.

Tiruvācakam reveals an amazing and a triumphant force of love, which sweeps humanity off its feet, in its abundant rush of energetic music. It tells them of the bliss of Love Divine. 'It is there at your reach—strewn in abundance around you. Wont you sip it to embelish your soul', exhorts the poet.

'While there is time, give Him your love, and save
yourselves ! Haste ye to Him
Who ate the poison, Whom 'tis hard for him WHO ATE THE EARTH,
And him of faces four, and all the heavenly ones, to draw anigh ;
Who to His servants stores of grace dispenses, our good
Pāṇdi-lord !'[3]

It has been studied so far how Māṇikkavācakar enjoyed the consummation or summit of his spiritual life i.e. the Unitive Life and how he expressed his unique experiences in the immortal words of poetry.

[1] Mysticism P. 428-429.
[2] The Marshalling of the Sacred Host : 5 P. 344.
[3] The Sacred Pāṇḍi : 5 P. 289.

8. SYMBOLISM

In the detailed account of the mystic experiences of Māṇikka-vācakar given earlier, we have shown that he makes use of certain symbols in his poetry to describe his supernal experiences. We did not examine the symbols and images there so much as the stages of his experience. Here an attempt is made to examine the symbols used in Tiruvācakam. Are they traditional or his own creations? What are the images evoked? To what extent is his experience conveyed thereby?

His experience is something extraordinary. Its intensity and complexity can be communicated only by suggestive symbols or images clustered together around one main metaphor, until one sense impression is translated into another and both become symbols of the original impression. It may be noted here that the traditional European symbolists such as Mallarme, Verlaine, Baudelaire, etc. had a conviction that 'the transient objective world is not true reality but a reflection of the Invisible Absolute'.[1] Hence their recourse to metaphors and symbols to express the apprehension of Reality. Now it is more true in the case of the poet-saint Māṇikkavācakar who had a transcendental vision of God and who struggles hard to express it in words which are after all a limited medium as a means of expression. What is felt and known as a transcendental vision of God by Māṇikkavācakar is a million times greater than what words can convey. Hence the recourse to symbols.

The symbols used by Māṇikkavācakar connote his vision and his union with God. The vision of Reality at Tirup-peruntuṟai,

[1] A Companion to World Literature. P. 432.

which the poet had at the wake of His soul's perception, was two-fold both in its immanent and transcendent aspects. It may be noted that in all the stages of his mystic experience the poet experienced divinity with two-fold aspects. He also craves for inward purity and perfection. Hence the poet-saint's use of different sets of symbols, pointing to the same experience. The symbols trace the growth, continuity and development of his experiences, beginning from the awakening of the soul up to the Unitive Life.

Evelyn Underhill speaks of the three kinds of symbols used by mystics.

'These special mystical diagrams, these symbolic and artistic descriptions of man's inward history—his secret adventures with God are almost endless in variety . . . . But the majority of them, I think, express a comparatively small number of essential doctrines or fundamental ways of seeing things ; and as regards their imagery, they fall into three classes, representative of the three principal ways in which man's spiritual consciousness reacts to the touch of Reality . . . . The first is the craving which makes him a pilgrim and wanderer. It is the longing to go out from his normal world in search of a lost home, 'a better country' . . . The next is that craving of heart for heart, of the soul for its perfect mate, which makes him lover. The third is the craving for inward purity and a perfection, which makes him an ascetic, and in the last resort a saint.[1]

(*a*) Those who conceive the perfect as a beatific vision exterior to them and very far off, who find in the Doctrine of Emanations something which answers to their inward experience, will feel the process of their entrance into reality to be a quest, an arduous journey from the material to the spiritual world. They move away from, rather than trnasmute to another form, the life of sense. The ecstasies of such mystics will answer to the root-meaning of that much perverted word, as a 'standing out' from themselves ; a flight to happier countries far away. For them, the soul is outward bound towards its home.[2]

(*b*) Those for whom mysticism is above all things an intimate and personal relation, the satisfaction of a deep desire . . . . will

[1] Mysticism, P. 126-127.
[2] *Ibid.*, P. 128, Para 3.

fall back upon imagery drawn largely from the language of earthly passion.[1]

(c) Those who are conscious rather of the Divine as a Transcendent life immanet in the world and the self, and of a strange spiritual seed within them by whose development man, moving to higher levels of character and consciousness, attains his end, will see the mystic life as involving inward change rather than outgoing search . . . .[2]

The nature of symbols are said to vary according to the nature of the kinds of Illumination experienced by the mystics.

Māṇikkavācakar had all the three kinds of experiences referred to by Underhill and hence the three-fold nature of the symbols used by him. Following Underhill we can name these symbols as those expressed in the Language of Pilgrimage, those in the Language of Earthly Passion and those in the Language of Alchemy.[3]

The language of spiritual marriage used by the poet, which speaks of spiritual union with God, belongs to the second type, viz. the language of earthly passion. In the chapter on Unitive Life, it was stated that his vision of God in His immanent aspect, and his communion with Him led to the metaphor of the bride and the eternal bridegroom. The language of spiritual marriage is used to convey the experience of bliss. We have discussed this in detail in the chapter on Unitive Way. Ever since his conversion he felt a closer relationship with the Absolute, with frequent visions of His personal Form. This feeling of personal relationship has consummated into union which is expressed in the language of spiritual marriage. In this chapter let us examine the symbols used by Māṇikkavācakar to express the various stages of his experience, prior to unitive stage, couched in the language of earthly passion.

Language of erathly passion :**

The poet-saint refers to his mystic vision at Tirup-perenturai, as a vision of the spiritual guide or master, or the vision of Guru

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[1] *Ibid.*, P. 128. Para 4.
[2] *Ibid.*, P. 128-129.
[3] Mysticism. P. 128 & 141.
** Here the order of the sub-headings is changed for conveneinece of discussion.

In the awakening of the soul, we have seen that 'an external event'—an occurrence in the world of objects—led to the emergence of the vision within. The sight of the Guru, under the shades of the Kurunta tree, surrounded by some disciples is said to have brought about a sublimation of the soul in Māṇikkavācakar and we have seen that this is the first experience that led to the awakening of his self. We have also tried to explain the exact nature of the vision with certain evidences, from Tiruvācakam. First, there was the perception of the Holy Feet, which changed to the ineffable Light and then evolved into Civa, the Absolute. This is expressed in a well-known symbol or by a faimilar name, 'Guru' which Saivites like him are familiar with. The poet tries to express his overwhelming feelings of devotion and fulfilment in poetry.

What exactly is this dominant feeling at this time of mystic perception? As we have discussed in the chapter on 'Soul's Struggle', his mind that grew weary of wordly life and was nonplussed by the doubts and ambiguities of dogmatic religion and conflicting philosophies, was longing for a spiritual master who would guide him into the spiritual path. And he met the true spiritual master in the teacher whom he found under the Kurunta tree. The blessings of that spiritual Mentor or master bestowed on Māṇikkavācakar great spiritual knowledge and untold heavenly bliss. The inner vision and the external form that simultaneously inspired the inner vision are realized to be the same by Māṇikkavācakar. The inner perception was changing from one to another; the Holy Feet, the Flame and then Civam. It was indescribable; but the vision perceived without was clear—it was the form of Guru or Preceptor and it becomes the 'objective correlative' of the inner zeal (vision) and hence the words 'I perceived the Guru'.[1] The external personal form of the Guru symbolises the inner vision of the Absolute; it gives shape to the experience ineffable. This tangible corporal form,[2] unlike Yeat's spiritual mentor, who appears in the 'Second Coming'—'More image than shade, more shade than image'—is in well-known, recognisable human Form. This Form helps Māṇikkavācakar to fix his mind on Him and move towards Him, impelled by an insatiable desire to be one with Him.

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[1] The Sacred Cento : 91. P. 80.
[2] The Universe : Lines 61-63. P. 22.

If the perception of the Reality were merely a fleeting mystic experience, there is no question of identifying oneself with it emotionally. Here the inner vision which brought awakening of the soul, and the external vision of the Guru are realised by the poet as ONE. This leads to the emotional outbrust—an insatiable fervour on the part of the poet. The Form makes him realize that here at last is the 'Guru' whom he had been fervently seeking for a long time. Here is the Gracious Master, who ought to be loved. Hence the ecstatic invocation.

> 'Hail, foot of that master of masters who took
> me into His fold at Kōkaḻi'.[1]

Māṇikkavācakar looks upon himself as one who longed for ages in quest of Truth. He realises that God came down to claim him as a slave at Peruntu_ai. God manifested Himself as the Perceptor to awaken his self. The poet-saint has no doubt regarding this conviction.[2]

He says that the ineffable Absolute made its nature felt in his inner vision. It appeared as the Guru and enabled him to come into close contact with him as a kin. That which was far removed as Transcendent Reality thus came close to the poet as Guru—or established a close relation to the poet as his Preceptor. So we shall take it that the term 'Guru' or 'Preceptor' is not merely used as a symbol, to denote the Absolute, but to him it was synonymous with the Absolute itself. To the poet-saint, the Guru and the Reality are one and the same. When he repeatedly calls the Guru, 'God' or 'the Absolute', it is not a mere formality but his very conviction. Hence the words :

> 'The One most precious Infinite to earth came down ;
> Nor did I greatness of the Sage superne condemn,
> Who came in grace. Thus from the pair of sacred feet
> Like shadow from its substance parting not,
> Before, behind, at every point, to it I clung.[3]

The contact with the Guru at Peruntuṟai, as already mentioned, is the pivotal point in the spiritual history of Māṇikkavācakar.

[1] Civaṉ's Ways of Old : Line 3. P. 1. Pope's translation differs here.
[2] The Universe : Lines 58-63, P. 21, 22.
[3] Praise : Lines 75-79, P. 35.

Hence the words 'the King of Peruntuṟai'.[1] Later at Tirukaḻukuṉṟam, while experiencing the bliss of God's vision, he recalls Peruntuṟai,

'That I the matchless ornament might wear
of love unique,—draw nigh, and daily praise,—
Abashed with awe of reverence,—the shame
that knows no shame,—sinking amid the sea;
Of Perun-turrai, dear beyond compare,
the glorious ship I seized and climbed thereon;
Straightway, in splendour no eye sees, Thou cam'st,
AND SHOW'DST THYSELF UPON THE EAGLE'S HILL.'[2]

At Tillai he sings:

'As torrents burst their bounds, Thou rushest through my soul!
Civaṉ, Who dwell'st in Perun-turrai's shrine!'[3]

and

'Utt'ring but "PERUN-TURRAI," I'm from "births" released;
That healing foot fixt in my mind!'[4]

In the Wonder of Salvation he sings

'In gentle love He led me forth, loosing the prison bars of "bond";
Showed me the way to 'scape' and taught the meaning of the mystic OM
'Twas thus the GURU gave me grace:'[5]

Even while separated from the vision, he thinks of Peruntuṟai

'Thou, Who in Perun-turrai's happy home
'neath the Kuruntham's flow'ry shade didst rest.
O glorious Teacher! when Thy servant craving calls,
BID THOU IN GRACE MY FEARS BEGONE!'[6]

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[1] The Morning Hymn: 5. P. 209.
[2] The 'Eagle Mount': 4. P. 261-262.
[3] The Temple Lyric: 5. P. 221.
[4] The Ancient Mystic Word: 7. P. 340.
[5] The Wonder of Salvation: 7. P. 353.
[6] Grace: 7. P. 258.

All these examples show that the Perunturai episode is deeply branded by Divine Fire as it were, in his mind. He calls God the 'Great source of Being' and 'Father Glorious'. These expressions show the intimacy of feeling. The term 'Guru' then is a symbol of relation and feeling. It suggests intimacy, regard and devotion. There is also the traditional teaching of the Saiva religion which speaks of Civaṉ appearing as the Guru.[1] It is usual for the mystics to make use of the traditional images, doctrines, denominations, rituals of worship, etc. all popularised by their own religion. The Reality may also manifest itself as the Guru or Prceptor to the true devotee for imparting knowledge or Truth. Māṇikkavācakar naturally visualises God as the Guru. His mystical experience is expressed throughout in terms of Savite tradition.

The image of the Preceptor-disciple helps to show the intimacy of this personal relation to God. Moreover, Māṇikkavācakar's love for God is not one-sided, it is mutual. The Guru also bears a deep love for him.

'. . . . . . While heavenly ones extolled
Thou didst lie hid, ...
Thou cam'st in grace on this same earth, didst show
Thy mighty feet
To me who lay mere slave,—meaner than any dog,—
Essential grace more precious than a mother's love !'[2]

He sings the Absolute came in search of him to shower His Grace upon him. Again, in 'Forsake me Not' he sings

'. . . Thou mad'st false me Thine own, ...'[3]
'The Gracious-One Who left the heavens, enter'd
this earth, made men His own ?'[4]

In all these examples, God is the seeker, the poet's self is the object sought. The quest is on the part of the Divine Being to bless the human self. This reminds of a similar pursuit in Francis

1 Civa Nāṉa bhotam : 8th Cūtram.
2 Civaṉ's Ways of Old : Lines 49-50, 59-61, P. 5.
3 Forsake me Not : 2. P 86.
4 The Kuyil-Decad : 4. P. 199.

Thompson's poem 'The Hound of Heaven', where the unwilling self is pursued by the Reality.[1] Thus the teacher-disciple image serves to show the poet's close kinship to God.

So far we have looked into the symbol of 'Guru' which is concerned with the poet's conversion. Now let us turn to his Illumination and the relative images.

We have already come to some conclusions in our examination of the 'Illuminative' stage of the poet. In the discussion of 'The Self's apprehension of Reality in the phenomenal world or Illuminated vision of the world', we have come to know certain facts.[2]

1. God is the Divine energy permeating through all physical phenomena.
2. The Divine energy is revealed as the various powers activating all the components of the physical phonemena.
3. The Divine energy manifests its various capacities through the multifarious souls.
4. The prime cause of all the activating energy is Divine Grace. This Grace, is Shakti, the basic creative power, that activates the world with all the beings in it.
5. The Absolute is felt in its multifarious manifestations. God's will can directly activate beings or cause the awakening of the self.
6. The Divine Grace that he felt indirectly and directly is the basis of this life. He felt that the Grace realised directly protects, nurses and cares for him like a mother.

The Divine Being that caused the poet to have this mystic consciousness is claimed as the Preceptor or Guru. So, the Guru

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1 (a) 'In "The Hound of Heaven" Francis Thompson described with an almost terrible power, not the self's quest of adored Reality, but Reality's quest of the unwilling self'. (As quoted by Underhill, 'Mysticism'. P. 135).

(b) Radhakamal Mukerjee, in his book, 'The Theory and Art of Mysticism' remarks: 'God lays aside all His godliness in order to win over man'. P. 154.

(c) Jeyadeva's 'Gita Govinda' speaks of God cajoling man by saying, 'O Thou ! Surrender to Me thy generous lotus feet !'

2 This Thesis. P. 94-105.

symbol is born of intense feeling. Hence a symbol of feeling. The basic power, the preserving spirit of God is naturally visualized as a mother symbol. Divine Omnipotence is symbolised as Father. Thus Saiva religion does not think of the Father and Mother as two separate, distinct symbols of Civam. They are synthesised into one symbol of Civa-Shakti. This is because the Mother image concretises the Grace of God—the Father.

Accordingly, Māṇikkavācakar says,

> ' Indweller in the heart of those who ceaseless ponder Him ;
> The Far off-One ; the Warrior ; ever-loving habitant
> Of Perun-turrai's southern shrine ; the Sage ; half of Whose form
> The Lady shares ; the Lov'd-One Who made me, mere cur, His own ;
> With mother-love Who visits men ; the sevenfold world
> Whose essence is ; Ruler of souls ; SING we !
> AMMĀṈĀY, . . '[1]

At this stage, the Guru-disciple kinship evolves into a filial relation. It must be noted that the Guru is also traditionally loved and respected as Father. Hence his word, ' Praise to the foot of Īcaṉ (God) ; Priase to my Father's foot ! '[2]

> ' O Mother ! O my Sire ! My Gem beyond compare !
> Ambrosia, ever-precious yield of love ! '[3]

These exhortations show that the Guru symbol has been extended in its intimacy so as to enclose the symbol of Civa-Shakti (or Ammaiappaṉ). Thus the Guru-disciple relationship and the filial relationship which the poet felt for the Absolute are expressed in the Language of Earthly Pasion.

Language of Alchemy

Another set of symbols used by Māṇikkavācakar falls under the third category given by Underhill. She says :

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[1] The Ammāṉai : 7. P. 120-121.
[1] Civaṉ's Way of Old : Line 11. P.2.
[3] The Decad of the ' Tenacious Grasp ' : 3 P. 292.

'We come now to the symbols which have been adopted by those mystics in whom temperamental consciousness of their own imperfection, and of the unutterable perfection of the Absolute Life for which they longed, has overpowered all other aspects of man's quest of reality. The 'seek, and ye shall find' of the pilgrim, the 'by Love shall He begotten and holden' of the birde, can never seem an adequate description of experience to minds of this type. They are intent on the inexorable truth which must be accepted in some form by both these classes : the crucial fact that 'we behold that which we are,' or, in other words, that 'only the Real can know Reality.' Hence the state of the inward man, the 'unrealness' of him when judged by any transcendental standard, is their centre of interest. His remaking or regeneration appears to them as the primal necessity, if he is ever to obtain rights of citizenship in the 'country of the soul'.[1]

She calls this 'remaking', spiritual alchemy. Māṇikkavācakar who has used both the language of pilgrimage and the language of earthly passion, finds the fullest expression of his experience in the language of alchemy. 'The Marshalling of the Sacred Host', 'The Universe' and 'The Gold Dust' composed during the period of his Unitive Life, contain many illustrations of the Language of Alchemy. It is interesting to note that the poet actually uses the term 'vētakam' in 'The Marshalling of the Sacred Host', which means 'alchemy' and sings of the marvellous change of which he became conscious inwardly.

> 'The mystic change for which the heav'ns are glad
> will come ;— . . . .
> If He who cast the net,—the Woodman,—come, in
> grace made manifest to me ?'[2]

The 'mystic change' is interpreted by the Saiva Siddhanta as the transformation of 'Pasu Karaṇa' into 'Civa Karaṇa'. The intellect, mind and body do all become soaked, as it were, in God-consciousness, suffused with divnity. Māṇikkavācakar refers to this in another song also.

[1] Mysticism. P. 140.
[2] The Marshalling of the Sacred Host : 1. P. 342.

' With mighty fire of grace our humble dwellings
He destroyed that none were left.
To me as the ripe Nelli fruit in palm He was.'[1]

Here all that smacks of decay, all that is gross, associated with the body, is said to be destroyed, and a new consciousness of a re-birth is there. This is a consciousness of the process of immortalization, a spiritual reformation brought within. This spiritual alchemy is made possible by the act of Grace symbolised as Fire. The physical aspect is burnt out, and transformed into the aspect of Civam or immortality. At this stage of transformation, his self is identified with the Real. This is no fiction, says the poet, it is a very real experience, as clearly perceptible and tangible as the proverbial ' Nelli ' fruit placed on the open palm.

In another lyric the poet says that God metamorphosed him into a flaming fire.

' Erewhile, that I no more might 'bide with Him,
He sent, and plac'd me in this cell.
He look'd on me, spake gentlest words of mystery ;
break off the yoke ; His hand
Upraised, made former falseness cease, removed all
fault, filled me with gleaming light :
'TWAS THUS HE MADE ME HIS, AND JOIN'D ME TO HIS SAINTS :
SUCH WONDER HAVE WE SEEN ! '[2]

Thus it is clear that since God is Light, the enlightened Self too merges with the Radiant Effulgence. The natural power of man's intellect is a spark of Heaven, which by His Grace, flares forth into the Divine Flame.

The terms ' Civamātal ', ' tēvātal ', etc. used in the verses couched in the language of Deification show the final phase of this consciousness of inner alchmey. Māṇikkavācakar reached this final phase of divine consciousness as mentioned in the chapter on ' Unitive Life '.

1 The Universe : Lines 160-162. P. 28.
2 The Wonder-Decad : 8. P. 241.

After the awakening of the soul, it gradually evolves into Civam by undergoing a change which is also symbolicaly indicated in the poem ' The Gold Dust ' of Tiruvācakam.

There the poet speaks of certain energies which bring about a change in the ' soul '. Probably ' soul ' refers to his own self.

The energies underlying all things and movements in the world is the Divine power as we have already mentioned in the chapter on ' Illumination '. We can comprehend the Divine power by realising the true nature of the various energies, which reveal themselves as manifold powers of action. These powers of action, according to Saivism, are the Civashakties—usually symbolised as female powers. These powers which are latent in the mystics activate their illuminated, purified consciousness. Māṇikkavācakar was intuitively aware of the Civashakties, active within, which composed his illuminated consciousness.

In fact, there are twenty verses in the poem ' The Gold Dust ', which give a cluster of images, all symbolic of the Civashakties revealed by his self. The whole poem appears to be an allegory. Mānikkavācakar, well-talented in the literary art has created in this poem dynamic symbols which allegorically enact the drama of purification, illumination and union with the Reality. He shows here how the illumination he attained was a means leading to the union with the Reality.

The Civashakties or the powers of Civa, which branch off from the Divine Grace, work through the illuminated consciousness of the poet-saint. Let us now examine how the poet expresses the functioning of these divine powers within his self.

The world, all the physical phenomena, his body and intellect and all the capacities of his mind are wholly activated by the Divine Grace. This realization came to the poet-saint at the time of the true Illumination. This implies the purgation leading to the Illumination. The purgation is the annihilation of the ego (āṇavamalam). The ego, incidentally, is not the same as the sense of I-hood (āṇmapōtam). The latter is more deeply ingrained in the soul. This can be destroyed only after the agonies of the

Dark Night cease. The apprehension of the world changes with the annihilation of the ego. Underhill explains it as follows :

'The actual physical perceptions seem to be strangely heightened, so that the self perceives an added significance and reality in all natural things : is often convinced that it knows at last 'the secret of the world'.[1]

She also quotes Blake who says, 'the doors of perception are cleansed so that everything appears to man as it is infinite'.[2]

In fact, it is better to call this stage, 'the sublimation of ego' yielding better results than an annihilation as such. The poem 'The Gold Dust' shows that this sublimation was a process in the illuminated consciousness of the poet. It is this process that is given the form of an allegory in the poem.

The process of sublimation is signified with the symbol of processing a certain bathing powder. It was in vogue some time ago, among the womenfolk in Tamil Nadu, to prepare bathing powder from Saffron and other perfumed ingredients. Māṇikkavācakar uses this practice of the womenfolk as the basis of his allegory. Here the women symbolise the Civashakties who set on the process of sublimating the soul. Accordingly, the self invokes the Civashakties to pound the sacred dust or the Shakties are called upon to bring about the inner sublimation.

'The pearl-twined wreath and flowery garland raise ;
the flower-vase place, incense, and sacred lamp !
To Catti, Cōmi, Goddess-earth, and Queen
of speech, chaunt ye auspicious songs !
For Citti, Gauri, Pārppathi, and Gaṅgai,—haste,
and coming wave your cooling fans !
The Sire, Lord of Ayyāṟu, the Father-King extol,
and dancing, POUND THE SACRED DUST OF GOLD !'[3]

Here the self is symbolised as a woman. All verses in this decade 'The Gold Dust' end with the refrain—'Pound we the sacred dust

[1] Mysticism. P. 240.
[2] Blake. 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell'. XXII.
[1] The Gold Dust : 1. P. 128.

of Gold'. According to Kāḻi Tāṇṭavarāyar the golden coloured saffron may be taken as a symbol for ego. It is to be pounded and the sense of ego is to be sublimated and refined into Illumination. The means of sublimation—the women who do the actual pounding—are said to be the eight women symbolishing the eight Civashakties.

Saffron is placed in a huge mortar and pounded. The huge mortar then stands for the world. The self's apprehension and the change it undergoes do both occur in the world. Hence the world is symbolised as a huge mortar. The pestle is the true wisdom or illumination attained at the time of the self's awakening.

' Many a pestle would the great ones upraise ;
that the world would not serve for a mortar.

To mix the fragrant dust the saints crowd round,
that the worlds suffice not to behold.

In favouring love He made us slaves His own ;
and gave His flowery Feet to crown our brows.

To the mountain's Son-in-law, joyous ever,
sing we and POUND THE DUST OF GOLD !'[1]

The women gather and prepare the scented powder. They do so in order that

' For our Lord of the flowing flower-crowned lock
we needs must POUND THE SACRED DUST OF GOLD !

Ye of the beauteous shapely eyes, come ye,
and coming all, with us in union sing.

Cry out, nor stand aloof from the devoted throng ;
bow down, our King, our Dancer worshipping !

The Goddess and He coming shall take us
for theirs : POUND WE THE DUST OF RUDDY GOLD !'[2]

Thus the process of sublimation of the ego takes place primarily for attaining Illumination. In other words, it is the sublimation

[1] The Gold Dust : 6. P. 131.
[2] *Ibid* : 2, P. 129.

of the ego that makes the self realise that there is nothing but God's will or Grace.

Language of Pilgrimage

Māṇikkavācakar gives poetic expression to his apprehension of the Absolute both in its transcendental and immanent aspects. But the Absolute in its transcendental aspect is conceptless. To apprehend it is to experience ineffable awe and reverence. How can It arouse passion ? How then can the poet be said to use the language of earthly passion to describe his transcendental or mystic experience of this kind ? We can say that this passion or intense longing is felt only at the commencement of the apprehension. When the self goes in quest of the Reality, it is impelled by a tremendous passion to reach the Truth. This spiritual quest, propelled from within and fed within by inexhaustible love and longing akin to the wander lust of explorers—this is often likened to a journey or pilgrimage. John Bunyan[1] spins out a whole novel with this elongated metaphor of a spiritual journey called Pilgrim's Progress. In fact, the search for the Absolute, which is beyond all that is beyond, naturally brings in the idea of pilgrimage which is also true of Māṇikkavācakar's mystic experience.

During his awakening of the soul, the poet calls God as one who dwells far away. ' Thou'rt afar '.[2]

Having seen God so close in the form of a spiritual Mentor it sounds rather strange that the poet should address Him as ' Thou art afar '. In the very next breath he utters, ' Thou art near '. This duality indicates a deeper truth. In spite of his ecstatic vision and proximity to the Absolute in His personal form, the poet still feels in his exalted consciousness that there is till a transcendental aspect which is yet to be perceived. Hence the words : ' Thou'rt afar, art near '.

He is forced by an overwhelming inner longing to apprehend Him in His transcendental aspect as well. He expresses his desire in the first song, ' Civaṉ's Ways of Old '.

[1] The author of ' The Pilgrim's Progress '.
[2] Civaṉ's Ways of Old : Line 44. P. 4.

'. . . . . . The blessed ones
In Civapuram who dwell,—full many a one,—beneath
The feet of Civan̲, lowly bending utter praise.'[1]

These lines indicate that only the blessed ones apprehend God's Transcendence. God, the Absolute, the Formless, the Attributeless, is taken to live in a place called 'Civapuram' and the poet expresses his intense desire to go there. This is an instance of the language of pilgrimage. Thus the symbol of a journey is suggested in the very first song.

In another song he sings that God Himself bade him come to 'The Dancing Hall at Tillai'. The poet says that God went away to Tillai with his devoted disciples, leaving him behind :

'. . . . in Tillai filled with good,
He bade draw nigh th' all-glorious company ;
Yet, Ah ! He left me *HERE*.'[2]

The word 'here' is used with reference to this world where he suffers with the bonds of attachments, though his soul is awakened. As contrasted to this, 'Tillai' denotes God's Transcendence. How does Tillai signify transcendence ?

The Saivite works call the Hall at Tillai simply 'Veḷi' i.e. Space. In fact, the term 'Ampalam' or 'Hall' is only a symbol of veḷi or space, the limitless, the Formless. Poet Cēkkiḻār says that those who see the Ampalam or Hall without realising the 'veḷi' or space can never realise the Transcendent aspect of God.[3] According to Saivism, this veḷi is also termed Chitcapai or Chiṟṟampalam. That is the reason why Māṇikkavācakar, who longs for His Transcendental vision, felt that he was bidden to go to Tillai. When he experienced the Unitive Life, the poet expresses in certain songs, that God dwells in 'Vāṉavūr', or 'Civapuram' or 'Civalōkam'.

'Possess we the heavenly fortress, where hosts
of illusion come not !'[4]

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1 Civan̲'s Ways of Old : Lines 93-95. P. 7.
2 Civan̲'s Fame : Lines 127-129. P. 15.
3 Periyapurāṇam.
4 The Sacred March : 1. P. 333.

'. . . . . . . To Civan's town
Come, move we on, to reach the sacred foot
of BHUYAṄGAN, to Mal divine unknown !'[1]

' The Teacher, Lord of Civa-world, in Tillai's porch He rules.'[2] If Tillai is the symbol of the Absolute in Its Transcendental aspect, we can take it that the poet symbolises Civapuram or Vānavūr or Civalōkam as the place where his soul could be in permanent union with the Absolute.

After the awakening of the soul at Peruntu_ai, Māṇikkavācakar was impelled by an inner urge to progress towards the goal of realising God in His Transcendental aspect and commingling with Him. This was the consummation of his spiritual quest. It is this consummation that is symbolically represented as Tillai, Civapuram, Vānavūr, Civalōkam, etc. in various contexts. Thus the final or the ultimate goal of spiritual progress is concretised as a '*place*'. So, naturally the progress towards the place becomes symbolically a pilgrimage.

The life of gradual spiritual purification and sainthood may also be spoken in terms of a pilgrimage. In Hinduism, the various gradations of spirituality, reached through gradual purification and sublimation are spoken as *Buvanas*, or Lokas in the various *Tatvās* or stages of spiritual evolution. Saint Rāmaliṅkar's interpretation of the phrase ' Ulakelām '[3] can be taken as dealing with the Tatvabuvanas.

Again, the poet Māṇikkavācakar sings of certain definitive realization vouchsafed by God. There is first the illumination under the Kurunta tree at Peruntu_ai, often referred to in the course of this paper. He refers to the upatēca of ' Civāyanama '.[4] There is another reference to the realization of ' OM '.[5] He refers to his being shown the limitless form at ' The Eagle Mount '.[6] There is the realization at Tillai, where the poet exclaims ' I saw '.[7]

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[1] The Pilgrim Song : 8. P. 331.
[2] The maidens' Song of the Dawning : 2. P. 105.
[3] The first line of Cēkkiḻār's Periyapuāṇam.
[4] Sacred Sadness : 10. P. 301.
[5] The Wonder of Salvatioa : 7. P. 353.
[6] The Eagle Mount : 1. P. 260.
[7] Mine eyes have seen : P. 264-267.

These are all symbolic references to varying kinds of spiritual realization achieved, according to the ripeness in the poet's mystic consciousness.

The language of pilgrimage is obvious in most of the verses of Tiruvācakam. In fact, it has been a Hindu religious tradition to speak of the soul's progress as a pilgrimage to holy places.

So far the various stage of Māṇikkavācakar's spiritual progress likened to a journey have been examined. Then there is the real pilgrimage also. The poet-saint went on a real pilgrimage to many holy places after he left Peruntuṟai. The Kīrti Tiru Akaval gives an account of all such places visited by him, and of his experience of Godhead in all the places.[1] In the poem 'Kīrti Tiru Akaval' the poet gives besides the place names, the spiritual message bringing out the greatness of Shakti (or Divine Grace) and the varied manifestations of Civa as revealed in each place.

The soul is said to 'search' for God seeking Him through every street, but he bewails the non-co-operation of his mind and sense with his life's yearning.

> 'Thou seekest Him not through every street ;
> Thou wailest not ; . . '[2]

is the cry of his heart. He longs to search and search for His Holy Feet everywhere and in searching he should enter Civapuram. But the mind seems to have forgotten this goal, laments the poet.

> 'If 'tis not given to pass the golden gate,—
> where all may entrance find,
> And whence none e'er departs ;—. . . . .
> . . . .
> . . . . a sinful man, what can I do for this ?'[3]

Having searched for His Holy Feet everywhere and not finding them, the poet-saint sobs aloud : 'It is hard to get rid of all the attachments ; much more arduous to trace the path leading to the

[1] Civaṉ's Fame : Lines 11-91.
[2] The Sacrec Cento : 31. P. 58.
[3] *Ibid* ; 36. P. 60.

apprehension of the Reality. To achieve both, God alone should come to his rescue. God is the only refuge. The poet puts this symbolically.

> ' Hail, bid me come, receive me ! grant Thy Foot to gain ; '[1]

Thus all the efforts undertaken by the poet to achieve complete purgation and attain mystic vision and apprehension of the transcendental aspect of the Absolute—all these are symbolically represented as a pilgrimage starting from one place, with the destination of Tillai.

> ' From birth itself, from sickness, age to 'scape ;
> earth's ties to loose ;
>
> I went,—I SAW the " Only-First-One," Owner of the world,
> Who dwells, while Vedic sages, hosts of heavenly ones adore,
> IN TILLAI-CITY'S SACRED COURT, girt round with leafy groves.'[2]

The apprehension of the Absolute in His Transcendence at Tillai, is symbolised as having reached the destination of the spiritual pilgrimage. So, on reaching Tillai the poet naturally bursts out in ecstasy.

> ' Pure Light, clear shining 'mid the darkness dense !
> Civaṉ, Who dwell'st in Perun-turrai's shrine !
>
> O Bliss, of qualities devoid ! Hence forth to me,
> who have to Thee drawn nigh, what can there LACK ?[3]

But the difference between the spiritual pilgrimage and an ordinary journey lies in the fact that the latter ceases when the destination is reached once, but the former is continued because the destination is elusive. The poet-saint enjoys His Transcendent Bliss at Tillai, but as this unitive stage of experience fluctuates he longs for permanent union with the Absolute. His longing impels him to continue the pilgrimage. This is symbolically represented as ' The Pilgrim Song '.

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[1] The Sacred Cento : 68. P. 71.
[2] Mine eyes have seen : 6. P. 266.
[3] The Temple Lyric :4. P. 221.

In this decad the poet calls upon others like him, to join him in his spiritual quest. The embodied self sometimes sets at naught the body in its quest. But here the poet calls upon the self to totally negate the body, abandon it and pursue the divine journey. Hence Māṇikkavācakar's exhortation to disciples to join him in his pilgrimage.

> ' . . . . Come ye
> with one accord ; behold, the time hath come ;
>
> Pass we,—falsehood for ever left behind,—
> to enter 'neath the Master's jewelled Feet ' ![1]

Fixing the goal of this journey as Unitive Life, the starting point is symbolically represented as the ' body stained with sin '. The destination is ' Civaṉ's World '.

> ' All ye His servants who've become,
> put far away each idle sportive thought ;
>
> Seek refuge at the Foot where safety dwells ;
> hold fast unto the end the sacred sign ;
>
> Put off from you this body stained with sin ;
> in Civaṉ's world He'll surely give us place !
>
> BHUYAṄGAṆ'S self, Whose Form the ashes wears,
> will grant you entrance ' neath His flow'ry feet ! '[2]

Thus the pilgrimage symbolises the shedding of the body with all its natural attachments and attaining spiritual salvation.

All the disciples are to gather in large numbers to go on this pilgrimage. What are they going to do when they reach the point of destination in Civapuram ?

> ' To Civapuram, that fill'd with glory shines.
> To Civaṉ's foot go we to worship there !
>
> Before the saints that there abide we'll move,
> and stand in soul-dissolving rapture there ![3]

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[1] The Pilgrim Song : 1. P. 327.
[2] The Pilgrim Song : 4. P. 329.
[3] *Ibid* : 6 P. 330.

The next song is a significant example of the Language of Pilgrimage.

> ' Let those that bide abide,—abide not we
> in world that not abides. Straight pass we on
>
> Unto the foot of our Lord . . . .
>
> All ye that loitering stand delay not now ! . . . .
> Gather in one to march, where'er ye stand !'[1]

There is no time to lose. They should reach there before the gates of the city of Civa are closed.

The poet symbolises his efforts to attain Unitive Life not only as a pilgrimage, but also as ' a Sacred March ' (or ' a Holy War '—as Pope translates it) ' consisting of holy warriors, viz. Siva Saints, Devout men, yogies, etc.' This Sacred March of this Holy Army is not hostile to Civapuram, but it is a march to conquer the forces of Māya (of attachments) and reach Civapuram. The weapons wielded by the army and marshalling of the ' forces ' are used as symbolic representations to indicate the spiritual urge and the conquest of the life of attachments. Certain details are given as follows :

> ' Strike the sounding drum of the Guru,
> Wielder of wisdom's sword ;
>
> Spread the white canopy over the Guru,
> Who mounts the charger of heaven ;
>
> Enter and take to you armour of ashes, fragrant,
> divine ;
>
> Possess we the heavenly fortress,
> where hosts of illusion come not ! '[2]

With wisdom as sword, with fragrant ashes as armour, with the cosmic-sound as drum, let us move forward ; before the forces of delusion destroy us, let us destroy it ; and possess the heavenly fortress of ' Vāṉavūr '.

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[1] *Ibid* : 7. P. 330-331. Pope's translation differs here.
[2] The Sacred March : 1. P. 333.

Now, let us look into the second stanza.

'Servants of His,—march on in the van ;
ye Devout ones,—move on the flanks ;

Ye Sages of power illustrious,—come
fill up the swelling ranks ;

Ye mystics of strength unfailing,—
advance and close up the rear ;

We shall rule the heavenly land,
no hosts of evil for ever to fear !'[1]

The first song speaks of the prowess attained by yoga or meditation by regular control of breath etc. This yogic concentration facilitates the attainments of Unitive Life.

The second song shows that the various devotees of Civa can attain His feet by serving and worshipping Him in various ways—but the various ways should all synthesise into one integrated whole—all tending towards Civaṉ. All the devotees are here symbolised as the components of the army.

The language used in these songs may be called the language of spiritual warfare.

So far we have seen how Māṇikkavācakar tries to give expression to his ineffable mystic experience by three kinds of symbols. The language of symbols serves to bring out the intensity of his feelings and the development of his mind and the progress of the spirit towards the Reality.

[1] *Ibid:* 2 P. 333.

9. CONCLUSION

The mystic experiences of Māṇikkavācakar as revealed in the Tiruvācakam have so far been examined and illustrated, largely in the light of the theories enunciated by Evelyn Underhill. The various stages of the poet-saint's spiritual evolution have been stutided.

In the Introduction nine issues have been raised for analysis and all questions have been answerd with illustrations in the various chapters of this thesis, while examining the stages of spiritual evolution. Now, by way of conclusion all the findings of the present student are briefly given below :

Answer to Issue No. 1

In the course of his self-examination Māṇikkavācakar critises himself severely. His poems reveal how his aspirations and idealism clashed with the disturbing mental aptitudes. He hated the very birth since it concealed true wisdom. Even though he did not become overpowered by human weaknesses, his extreme zeal to guard his mind made him strive hard. Thus the efforts taken to rescue himself from the danger of earthly life form the inner struggle. He became one with all the objects of suffering in the world. This identification made him struggle inwardly and express his agony through the medium of poetry.

Answer to Issue No. 2

The sage who appeared as the Guru at Tirup-peruntuṟai endowed Māṇikkavācakar with a mystical or transcendent consciousness. He attained 'self-awareness' by his contact with the 'Guru'. Consequently, this meeting enabled him to have an inner vision, to

apprehend the Absolute. This is his first mystic experience. This proved to be the nucleus, the driving force, as it were, of all the spiritual experiences that the poet had later in the course of his life.

Answer to Issue No. 3

With the exception of a few poems which are purely ethical, the entire Tiruvācakam is an expression of the mystic experience of the poet. The work depicts the quest of the poet's Soul after Truth. His first mystic experience was more than a vision. It infused in him physical, mental and spiritual bliss and impelled him on his spiritual quest leading to communion with the Absolute. The Tiruvācakam portrays the whole gamut of spiritual or mystic consciousness, beginning from Initiation upto the ultimate communion.

Answer to Issue No. 4

The poems of Tiruvācakam clearly reveal,

(*a*) the poet's pangs of separation that came in the wake of the fading away of the vision.

(*b*) his remorse and anguish caused by his feeling that the vision faded away because of worldly attachments that still lingered in his mind.

(*c*) the poet's agony to attain complete detachment and mortification. The bliss that came in the wake of the vision and the mental agony are both expressed alternately in the poems.

The songs of lamentation and agony reveal the poet's efforts towards purgation.

Answer to Issue No. 5

In consequence of the mystic experience, Māṇikkavācakar was able to apprehend another idea of reality. He became thoroughly aware of Divinity behind all objects in the world. He realized that God is the centre of life on earth, revealing His glory in all things, living and non-loving. This change of concept made him look upon the world as a divine manifestation, not a vale of sorrow or agony or suffering. He now mellowed into a being who can live

in harmony with the world, with no disturbing thoughts of its apparent duality of discordant elements.

Answer to Issue No. 6

Māṇikkavācakar realises that it is Grace alone that motivates and energises the whole world and his own self. He symbolises the Grace as the Mother, in keeping with Hindu tradition.

Answer to Issue No. 7

Māṇikkavācakar perceived the Absolute both in its immanent and transcendent aspects. He speaks of his apprehension of God in His personal Form. He describes the personal manifestation of the Divine in many of his poems. These may be interpreted as symbolic representations of his mystic apprehension of the Absolute.

Answer to Issue No. 8

Māṇikkavācakar describes his union with God through two kinds of symbols. One of them is the Language of Deification. While experiencing the mystic consciousness of union with God-head, he realizes the oneness of the self and Divinity. Thus he speaks of his self's being one with Civam.

Answer to Issue No. 9

Māṇikkavācakar uses the language of earthly passion also, viewing the Absolute as Love incarnate. First he looked upon the 'Guru' at Tirup-peruntuṟai as a divine manifestation and showed his reverential love for the Divine perceptor. Later, on realising His Grace, he symbolised Him as Mother and showered his deep affection, as an offspring of God. Finally, this deep affection mellowed into the ripe love of a beloved and the saint speaks of himself as a Bride and God as the Bridegroom.

To sum up, these conclusions reveal that Māṇikkavācakar ultimately enjoyed the supreme bliss of communion with the Absolute, rising from the level of human consciousness to the supra-mental plane of Divine Grace.

APPENDIX 'A'

MYSTICISM AND DASAKĀRYAM

A brief survey of Saiva Mysticism describing the spiritual ascensions of the individual soul to have direct union with God is attempted here. God-realisation admits of three stages during the mystic way viz. purgation, illumination and union. These stages are common to all mystics of the world.

When the spiritual aspirant attains maturity for his liberation from the earthly fetters, he is enlightened by his spiritual Guru about the shallowness, instability, and trivialities of earthly life and about the benefit of the supreme blessedness of God. The aspirant is fully ripe to understand the import of the spiritual instruction of the Guru in all its entirety and the hidden dimension of his own soul. He hastens to wean away his soul from the attachment of his body and world. He wants to reach the holy feet of Siva.

The Saiva tradition lays bare ten stages of ascensions to achieve the ultimate union of the soul with the supreme Reality. They are *Tattva Rupa*, *Tattva Darisana*, *Tattva Suddhi*, *Ātma Rupa*, *Ātma Darisana*, *Ātma Suddhi*, *Siva Rupa*, *Siva Darisana*, *Siva Yoga* and *Siva Bhoga*. These stages of ascensions can be classified for our convenient understanding into three zones. The first three viz. *Tattva Rupa*, *Tattva Darisana*, and *Tattva Suddhi* form the material zone. The second three viz. *Ātma Rupa*, *Ātma Darisana* and *Ātma Suddhi* form the spiritual zone. The remaining four viz. *Siva Rupa*, *Siva Darisana*, *Siva Yoga*, and *Siva Bhoga* form the Divine zone.

These ten ascensions or the three zones cannot be realised by the mystic's own effort alone, unless he is constantly aided by the Divine Grace of Siva. Even the faculties of cognition, will and conation of the mystic are ceaselessly aided by Divine Grace for their perception and expression. Even though the Divine Grace enshrines the soul from timeless beginning,

the triple faculties of the human-beings are unable to cognize the help rendered by it as these faculties are enshrouded by *Āṇavamala* which tends to paralalyse them always.

When the spiritual Guru instructs the disciple about human nature and its possibilities, its spiritual heritage, unlimited potentialities and the prospects of eternal happiness, he feels for the present limitations, object degradation, banality of life and tragic position and desires ardently to gain a new life in a world of unlimited being and freedom. His intense desire to break the ties that hold him fast in bondage and ignorance makes him discover his vast spiritual dimension. Then he sets off to seek his own salvation. In this endeavour he has to encounter with many a formidable obstacle. He has to overcome the alluring world and his deceptive senses, both external and internal. These confrontations can be won only by his profound love of God and the implicit faith and hope in the guidance of the Divine Grace.

When the mystic encounters with the first entity of the first zone viz., *Tattva Rupa*, he realises that his heritage is not welded with his body and the world for a limited life but a life of unconditioned (one for a) larger Divine life. He now realises that his body and the world around him are apart from himself and they are of no more use for him. This discernment is termed as *Tattva Rupa*. Then he comes to know that they are inert matter that can be comprehended by his own intelligence and that they are activated only by the Divine Grace though the proximity of the soul is essential for their activity. This profound insight is termed as *Tattva Darisana*.

Now the aspirant desires to transcend this plane of limitation completely to ward off its impact upon him. He gets himself totally alienated from the powerful impact of his body and the world with the aid of Divine Grace. This is called *Tattva Suddhi*. The mystic thus alienated from the earthly interests and becomes dead to the erstwhile world. In short the natural man dies. He is reborn into another higher mode of being. It is a death to one's own profane existence only to enter into the realm of divine unity. This is termed as mystical

death. Here death does not signify the de-sanctified sense of the term.

When the mystic overcomes the allurements and seeming pleasures of this fleeting world he is reborn again to a new quality of inclusive awareness. This is termed as resurrection. *Tattva Suddhi* is a mark of transcendence of human condition. This stage corresponds to partial purgation of the western mysticism. Now the mystic soul regains its unlimited intelligence. He shines like the rays of the moon that emerges immediately after eclipse. His demonstrative knowledge is obliterated and he gains the resplendant intelligence that is all pervasive.

The first entity of the second zone is *Ātma Rupa.* During this ascension the soul gets into another mode of higher living because the taint of the soul (*Āṇava*) is cured and the mystic feels that he has regained all pervasive consciousness. Here a word of caution is given to mystics. For a few mystics this all pervasive consciousness seems to be an autonomous state where they tend to feel as though they are enthralled by the cosmic consciouness oblivious of the supreme help that is rendered by the Divine Grace to attain this state. This happens when the mystic is relieved from the taint of bondage and ignorance. This is a temporary phase—in the spiritual quest that lasts for a while due to the traces of Āṇava that is lurking in the soul. *Saiva Siddanta* never derides this stage of experience during the mystic way but cautions that it is not the sublime goal of the God-word journey. During this stage a few mystics are tempted to call themselves ' parabrabhmam ' for they feel that they have reached the end. These mystics become quite ignorant of the benign service rendered by the Divine Grace to extricate themselves from the limited plane of profane life to another higher mode of sacred life. Hence this is termed as a mistaken mystic vision (திரிபுக் காட்சி) of the Lord during the mystic way. If the mystic persists still further in his contemplation the Divine Grace vouchsafes *Sivagñāna.* The mystic now understands through this divine—knowledge, that he receives all the worldly knowledge through the senses

only with the help of God's grace and perceives its own real nature as immaculate intelligence. This stage is called *Ātma Darisana*, the second entity of the spiritual zone. Here the mystic understands his creaturelines. During this stage the mystic undergoes many experiences. He understands his own real nature through apprehending God. He realises that God is the soul of the souls and He is highest of the high and the smallest of the small and all the world are within His bosom. This realisation of God, soul and the world is apprehended in a general manner. Even here the *Saiva Siddanta* cautions a note of warning. A few mystics are tempted to entertain a temporary feeling that they have gained an autonomous position equal to that of God and that they can perform the Divine five acts viz. creation, preservation, destruction, obscuration and bestowal of Grace. This experience is termed as *Siva Sama Vāda*.

The knowledge of *Akam Brahmam* and *Sivasamam* is caused by the traces of Mala lurking in the soul. These two modes of knowledge emerge out during the mystic way due to self-esteeming and self-possessing tendencies. Hence this knowledge is termed as *Pasugñāna* which is superior to *Pāsagñāna* and inferior to *Sivagñāna*. These stages correspond to partial illuminations of the western mystcism. *Pāsagñāna* is the knowledge that the soul derives through perception, inference and verbal testimony during the state of bondage. *Pasugñāna* is the knowledge regained by the soul of its pure intelligence after being cleansed of the taint of the soul. This knowledge leads erroneously to make the mystic think that he is *Parabrahmam.* This is only *Ātmagñāna* soul's intelligence and not Sivagñāna.

Between the stage of *Ātma Rupa* and *Ātma Darisana*, the Divine Grace manifests itself in the soul of the mystic and dispels the mistaken identification with *Parabrahma*. Here we have to notice that *Ātma Darisana* and *Siva Rupa* are said to be simultaneous experiences that is given to the mystic. Here the duality persists. The mystic thinks that he is vouchsafed with the Divine Grace. This sense of duality happens during the mystic way for a few mystics. This is termed as '*Sivarupa*'.

Though moving in a higher plane of being, some mystics cannot totally extricate themselves from the clutches of the 'old world'. They are cris-crossed between the values of Heaven and Earth. They are caught by the sense of Despondency on one side and a sense of hope on the others. They are tossed as a shuttle-cock between the light and the shade. They feel a profound sense of loss and desolation and try to offset the sense of oscillation by the help of the Divine Grace. This experience corresponds to the 'Dark Night of the soul' to a certain extent.

The third entity of the 2nd zone is *Ātma Suddhi.* Now the soul realises that the knowledge gained through matter and soul is not immaculate knowledge that helps to apprehend God. The knowledge given by God only is the real knowledge superior to these two modes of knowledge. The mystic can alienate himself from the infatuation of the world and the senses only through this God given knowledge viz., *Siva Gñāna.* This immaculate knowledge when given to the mystic, he discerns all things in their proper perspective. All the seeming pleasures of the world seem to be illusory. They vanish as mirage. The mystic must persist in this stage to chant the holy *panchātchara* (five letters) '*Sivayanama*' knowing their full import.

Siva Darisana and *Ātma Suddhi* happen simultaneously to the mystic. *Siva Darisana* is nothing but realizing that Siva performs the five divine acts for the benefit of the soul, whereas the soul cannot. During *Ātma Suddhi* the mystic realises that he has no will of his own. His will is subservient to the will of God; as Tennyson puts 'our wills are ours to make them thine'. During this stage of *Ātma Suddhi* the mystics undergo some experiences. The mystic discerns both potsherd and a piece of gold bear the same value. The mystic and God cleave to each and the former apprehends the latter everywhere.

During *Ātma Rupa* and *Ātma Darisana* the Lord bestows partial *Sivagñāna* to the mystic. During *Ātma Suddhi* He bestows still more knowledge. These stages show a graduated measure of illumination. '*Siva Yoga*' and '*Siva Bhoga*' are said to be

the ultimate gain of the mystic. Only during *Siva Yoga* the Lord bestows the supreme knowledge of God. Here the mystic is granted full enlightenment but not the Bliss par excellence. Just as sunlight before sunrise paves way to perceive the objects of the world in a hazy way, so also in *Siva Yoga*, the mystic is granted to enjoy hazy rays of God's bliss. During the state of Bondage the soul thinks it is a sovereign agent who cognizes and acts freely according to its will. At this stage God stands behind it and sets the soul according to its desire. Now in the freed state the mystic thinks that he has no free will at all and God is the only supreme Reality and he is encompassed by His infinitude and he has no separate existence as such. Now the mystic completely surrenders to the will of God. God is now the sole principle in the life of the mystic. As the triple faculties are directed towards the service of the Lord, the mystic lives in tune with the infinite and directs his faculties of cognition and conation in the Service of God. This corresponds to complete purgation and illumination of the western mysticism.

During this state the mystic undergoes several experiences as he is completely cleansed from the yoke of bondage and ignorance. The Divine grace breaks away the shells of ignorance and demonstrative knowledge. With the help of '*Sivagñāna*' the mystic apprehends God, activating the soul ceaselessly. His love increases by leaps and bounds. Siva who is integrated till now with all the sentients, unsentient beings, separates Himself and stands before the mystic's inner eye without any support. This experience reminds us of the mystic's apprehension of God face to face. This is termed as the pellucid experience ('*Sivayoga*').

The last stage in *Saiva* mysticism is *Sivabhoga*. In this stage the mystic enjoys the advaidic union with God. Just as the soul integrates with the eye and makes it perceive objects and at the same time itself sees, so also the Lord by the Union with the Soul of the mystic, makes 'him know and Himself knows.' When the mystic realises these two modes of help that God performs for his sake from timeless beginning for his 'soul making', his love of God is still intensified swells up only to

enjoy His bliss par excellence. This state of God experience is ineffable. Here the redeemed soul merges with God without losing its distinction. They are no longer two, but two in one. This is the ineffable integral experience of the mystic who fulfils his triumphant journey in the sublime goal of enjoying the Bliss of God in undying love. This is the summum bonum of mystical fulfilment of the soul.

Sivayoga is the Negative aspect of the ultimate triumph of the mystic. Here *Āṇava*, *Māya* and *Kanmam* are completely wiped out in the soul of the mystic. *Sivabhoga* is the positive aspect of the ultimate triumph of the mystic. These two stages of experience correspond to complete purgation, complete illumination and complete union of the western mysticism.

When the mystic thus abides in God, he has to preserve this state of union by ' living in the milieu' of the assembly of God men and offering worship in the temple not only to enrich God experience still deeper but also to ward off the impending danger of the erstwhile earthly life once again affecting him.

Sivagñāna Siddhiyar describes the union of the soul with God in a series of colourful similies.

1. Lord Siva draws the soul nearer to Him very close remaining immutable like the magnet attracts iron.
2. God makes the soul in his own image as pure omniscience like a piece of iron rod placed in the red-hot-fire is converted into fire.
3. God blots out the impurities of the soul as the red-hot-fire destroys the rust of a piece of iron.
4. God makes the soul lose its individuality and merge in Him only to enjoy His Divine qualities as the gross salt dissolves in water.
5. God helps the soul in its evolutionary process from the state of bondage (Pasuthuvam) to attain its spontaneity and freedom from the world of matter to reach its

destiny (*Sivathuvam*) like a piece of copper is transmuted by alchemic processes to a piece of Gold.

6. God is an undistinguishable and eternal union with the released soul suffusing it with the Bliss par excellence like the Sweet drink, made of the juice of sugar cane, honey, milk, fruits, ambrosia, sugar candy, and jaggery—all combined together into a sweet elixir.

APPENDIX 'B'

A NEW ORDER OF THE POEMS OF TIRUVĀCAKAM

S. No.	Name of poem	Serial No. according to the editions	Place where it was sung	Evidence for assigning the place
I.	*The Awakening of the Self :*			
(1)	Civaṉ's Ways of Old.	1	Tirup-peruntuṟai.	(1) Hail, foot of the Guru that rules in Kōkaḻi. (Line : 3) (2) Praise to the foot of glorious Perun-tuṟai's God. (Line : 15)
II.	*The Purgation or Purification of the Self :*			
(2)	The Sacred Cento.	5	-do-	Kāḻi Tāṇṭavarāyar's Commentary. P. 455.
(3)	Forsake me not.	6	Uttarakōca-maṅkai.	The phrase, 'Uttara-kōcamaṅkai's king' occurring in almost all verses of the poem.
(4)	The Refuge Decad.	24	Tirup-peruntuṟai.	The Commentary cited above. P. 770.
(5)	The Desire Decad.	25	-do-	-do- P. 777.
(6)	Weariness of Life.	23	-do-	The line, 'Civaṉ who did'st draw near in sacred Perunturrai's shrine to dwell' occurring in each verse.

S. No.	Name of poem	Serial No. according to the editions	Place where it was sung	Evidence for assigning the place
III.	*The Illuminative Way :*			
(7)	The Morning Hymn.	20	Tirupperunturai	The line, 'Civa-Lord who dwell'st in Perunturrai' occurring in all the verses.
(8)	The Miracle Decad.	41	-do-	The commentary cited above. P. 884.
(9)	The Wonder Decad.	26	-do-	P. 783. -do-
(10)	Sacred Sadness.	38	-do-	P. 870 -do-
(11)	The Sacred Pandi.	36	-do-	P. 855. -do-
(12)	The Head Decad.	42	-do-	'The Warrior-Lord in Perunturrai who dwells'. (Verse : 3).
(13)	The Sacred Word.	43	-do-	'The King of virtuous Excellence, Who reigns benign, in Perunturrai'. (Verse :1).
(14)	The Ancient Mystic Word	48	-do-	Each verse contains either the word 'Perunturrai' or 'Kōkaḻi'
IV	*The Dark Night of the Soul :*			
(15)	No joy in life	28	-do-	The line, 'Civaṉ, in holy Perunturrai's shrine Who dwell'st' occurring in each verse
(16)	Grace	29	-do-	'In Perunturrai Thou 'neath the Kuruntham's flowery shade didst rest'. (Verse : 1).

S. No.	Name of poem	Serial No. according to the editions	Place where it was sung	Evidence for assigning the place
(17)	Mystic Union	27	Tirupperunturai	The commentary by Kāḻi Tāṇṭavarāyar. P. 791.
(18)	The Sacred Lament.	39	Tiruvārūr.	'Owner of blest Ārūr'. (Verse : 1).
(19)	Devout Musings.	44	Tillai.	The Commentary by Kāḻi Tāṇṭavarāyar. P. 907.
(20)	The Garland of Rapture.	50	-do-	'O God, Dancer in Tillai's hall'. (Verse : 6).
(21)	The Ancient Temple Song.	21	-do-	The word 'Kōyil' (Temple) contained in the name of the poem denotes Tillai.
(22)	The Supplication.	32	-do-	The last verse of this poem likens the last one of the 'Ancient Temple Song'.
(23)	The Bruised Heart.	33		(With no evidence whatever, it is assigned to Perunturai)
V. The Unitive Life :				
(24)	The Eagle Mount.	30	Tirukaḻukkuṉram.	The name of the poem.
(25)	Civaṉ's Fame.	2	Tillai.	'The Sacred foot that danced in Tillai'. (Line : 1).
(26)	Praise.	4	-do-	'Dancer in Southern Tillai's court'. (Line : 92).

S. No.	Name of poem	Serial No. according to the editions	Place where it was sung	Evidence for assigning the place
(27)	Mine eyes have seen	31	Tillai.	'I've Tillai seen that holds the Gem, which endless rapture yields'. (Verse : 1).
(28)	My soul is consumed.	34	-do-	The commentary by Kāḻi Tāṇṭavarāyar. P. 841.
(29)	The Temple Lyric.	22	-do-	The name of the poem.
(30)	The Decad of Glorious Tillai.	40	-do-	Each verse contain the word, Tillai.
(31)	The Decad of the Tenacious Grasp.	37	Tirutōṇipuram.	The Commentary by Kāḻi Tāṇṭavarāyar. P. 862.
(32)	The Sacred Veṇpā.	47	Tillai.	-do- P. 922.
(33)	The Marshalling of the Sacred Host.	49	-do-	-do- P. 932.
(34)	The Ten Insignia.	19	-do-	-do- P. 727.
(35)	The Mother Decad.	17	-do-	-do- P. 712.
(36)	The Kuyil Decad.	18	-do-	-do- P. 719.
(37)	The Maidens' Song of the Dawning.	7	Tiruvaṇṇāmalai.	'Aṇṇāmalai His form,' (Verse. 18).
(38)	The Ammāṉai.	8	-do-	'Aṇṇāmalai's His shrine : . . . .' (Verse : 10).

S. No.	Name of poem	Serial No. according to the editions	Place where it was sung	Evidence for assigning the place
(39)	The Gold Dust.	9	Tillai.	'Sing ye southern Tillai, the saints' abode !' (Verse 19)
(40)	The Humming Bee.	10	-do-	'He of the temple court.' (Verse 2).
(41)	The Tambour Song.	11	-do-	'Lord of fair Tillai's porch' (Verse : 16).
(42)	The Cāḻal.	12	-do-	'The Lord of Tillai's court' (Verse 9).
(43)	The Lilies.	13	-do-	The Commentary by Kāḻi Tāṇṭavarayar. P. 673.
(44)	The Unthiyār.	14	-do-	-do- P. 684.
(45)	The Tōṇōkkam.	15	-do-	'O Dancer blest in shining Tillai's court !' (Verse 1)
(46)	The Golden Swing.	16	-do-	The Commentary by Kāḻi Tāṇṭavarāyar.
(47)	The Decad of Dread.	35	-do-	'Who dances in the hallow'd court'. (Verse 3).
(48)	The Pilgrim Song.	45	Tillai.	The Commentary by Kāḻi Tāṇṭavarāyar. P. 912.
(49)	The Sacred March.	46	-do-	-do- P. 920.
(50)	The Universe.	3	-do-	-do- P. 321.
(51)	The Wonder of Salvation.	51	-do-	-do- P. 946.

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